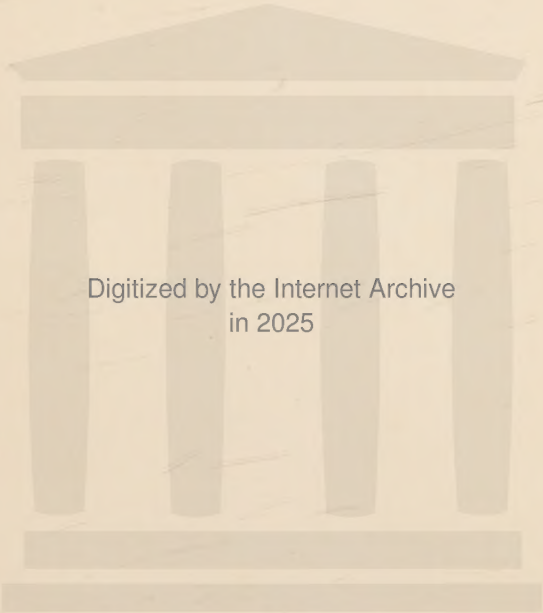

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Thomas Carlyle (Chelsea, 1865)

PROSE MASTERPIECES

FROM

MODERN ESSAYISTS

ARTHUR HELPS, CHARLES KINGSLEY, CURTIS, LOWELL,
CARLYLE, MACAULAY

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ARTHUR HELPS.

BORN 1808 — DIED 1881.

ON THE ART OF LIVING WITH OTHERS.

By ARTHUR HELPS.

THE "Iliad" for war; the "Odyssey" for wandering; but where is the great domestic epic? Yet it is but commonplace to say, that passions may rage round a tea-table, which would not have misbecome men dashing at one another in war chariots; and evolutions of patience and temper are performed at the fireside, worthy to be compared with the Retreat of the Ten Thousand. Men have worshipped some fantastic being for living alone in a wilderness; but social martyrdoms place no saints upon the calendar.

We may blind ourselves to it if we like, but the hatreds and disgusts that there are behind friendship, relationship, service, and, indeed, proximity of all kinds, is one of the darkest spots upon earth. The various relations of life, which bring people together, cannot, as we know, be perfectly fulfilled except in a

state where there will, perhaps, be no occasion for any of them. It is no harm, however, to endeavor to see whether there are any methods which make these relations in the least degree more harmonious now.

In the first place, if people are to live happily together, they must not fancy, because they are thrown together now, that all their lives have been exactly similar up to the present time, that they started exactly alike, and that they are to be for the future of the same mind. A thorough conviction of the difference of men is the great thing to be assured of in social knowledge: it is to life what Newton's law is to astronomy. Sometimes men have a knowledge of it with regard to the world in general: they do not expect the outer world to agree with them in all points, but are vexed at not being able to drive their own tastes and opinions into those they live with. Diversities distress them. They will not see that there are many forms of virtue and wisdom. Yet we might as well say: "Why all these stars; why this difference; why not all one star?"

Many of the rules for people living together in peace follow from the above. For instance,

not to interfere unreasonably with others, not to ridicule their tastes, not to question and re-question their resolves, not to indulge in perpetual comment on their proceedings, and to delight in their having other pursuits than ours, are all based upon a thorough perception of the simple fact that they are not we.

Another rule for living happily with others is to avoid having stock subjects of disputation. It mostly happens, when people live much together, that they come to have certain set topics, around which, from frequent dispute, there is such a growth of angry words, mortified vanity, and the like, that the original subject of difference becomes a standing subject for quarrel; and there is a tendency in all minor disputes to drift down to it.

Again, if people wish to live well together, they must not hold too much to logic, and suppose that every thing is to be settled by sufficient reason. Dr. Johnson saw this clearly with regard to married people, when he said: "Wretched would be the pair above all names of wretchedness, who should be doomed to adjust by reason every morning all the minute detail of a domestic day." But the application should be much more general than he

made it. There is no time for such reasonings, and nothing that is worth them. And when we recollect how two lawyers, or two politicians, can go on contending, and that there is no end of one-sided reasoning on any subject, we shall not be sure that such contention is the best mode for arriving at truth. But certainly it is not the way to arrive at good temper.

If you would be loved as a companion, avoid unnecessary criticism upon those with whom you live. The number of people who have taken out judges' patents for themselves is very large in any society. Now it would be hard for a man to live with another who was always criticising his actions, even if it were kindly and just criticism. It would be like living between the glasses of a microscope. But these self-elected judges, like their prototypes, are very apt to have the persons they judge brought before them in the guise of culprits.

One of the most provoking forms of the criticism above alluded to is that which may be called criticism over the shoulder. "Had I been consulted," "Had you listened to me," "But you always will," and such short scraps

of sentences may remind many of us of dissertations which we have suffered and inflicted, and of which we cannot call to mind any soothing effect.

Another rule is, not to let familiarity swallow up all courtesy. Many of us have a habit of saying to those with whom we live such things as we say about strangers behind their backs. There is no place, however, where real politeness is of more value than where we mostly think it would be superfluous. You may say more truth, or rather speak out more plainly, to your associates, but not less courteously, than you do to strangers.

Again, we must not expect more from the society of our friends and companions than it can give; and especially must not expect contrary things. It is somewhat arrogant to talk of travelling over other minds (mind being, for what we know, infinite): but still we become familiar with the upper views, tastes, and tempers of our associates. And it is hardly in man to estimate justly what is familiar to him. In travelling along at night, as Hazlitt says, we catch a glimpse into cheerful-looking rooms with light blazing in them, and we conclude, involuntarily, how happy the inmates must be. Yet

there is heaven and hell in those rooms, the same heaven and hell that we have known in others.

There are two great classes of promoters of social happiness; cheerful people, and people who have some reticence. The latter are more secure benefits to society even than the former. They are non-conductors of all the heats and animosities around them. To have peace in a house, or a family, or any social circle, the members of it must beware of passing on hasty and uncharitable speeches, which, the whole of the context seldom being told, is often not conveying but creating mischief. They must be very good people to avoid doing this; for let human nature say what it will, it likes sometimes to look on at a quarrel; and that, not altogether from ill-nature, but from a love of excitement—for the same reason that Charles II liked to attend the debates in the Lords, because they were "as good as a play."

We come now to the consideration of temper, which might have been expected to be treated first. But to cut off the means and causes of bad temper is, perhaps, of as much

importance as any direct dealing with the temper itself. Besides, it is probable that in small social circles there is more suffering from unkindness than ill-temper. Anger is a thing that those who live under us suffer more from than those who live with us. But all the forms of ill-humor and sour-sensitiveness, which especially belong to equal intimacy (though indeed they are common to all), are best to be met by impassiveness. When two sensitive persons are shut up together, they go on vexing each other with a reproductive irritability.[1] But sensitive and hard people get on well together. The supply of temper is not altogether out of the usual laws of supply and demand.

Intimate friends and relations should be care-

[1] Madame Necker de Saussure's maxim about firmness with children has suggested the above. "Ce qui plie ne peut servir d'appui, et l'enfant veut être appuyé. Non-seulement il en a besoin, mais il le désire, mais sa tendresse la plus constante n'est qu'à ce prix. Si vous lui faites l'effet d'un autre enfant, si vous partagez ses passions, ses vacillations continuelles, si vous lui rendez tous ses mouvements en les augmentant, soit par la contrariété, soit par un excès de complaisance, il pourra se servir de vous comme d'un jouet, mais non être heureux en votre présence; il pleurera, se mutinera, et bientôt le souvenir d'un temps de désordre et d'humeur se liera avec votre idée. Vous n'avez pas été le soutien de votre enfant, vous ne l'avez pas préservé de cette fluctuation perpétuelle de la volonté, maladie des êtres faibles et livrés á une imagination vive; vous n'avez assuré ni sa paix, ni sa sagesse, ni son bonheur, pourquoi vous croirait-il sa mère."—*L'Éducation Progressive*, vol. 1, p. 228.

ful when they go out into the world together, or admit others to their own circle, that they do not make a bad use of the knowledge which they have gained of each other by their intimacy. Nothing is more common than this, and did it not mostly proceed from mere carelessness it would be superlatively ungenerous. You seldom need wait for the written life of a man to hear about his weaknesses, or what are supposed to be such, if you know his intimate friends, or meet him in company with them.

Lastly, in conciliating those we live with, it is most surely done, not by consulting their interests, nor by giving way to their opinions, so much as by not offending their tastes. The most refined part of us lies in this region of taste, which is perhaps a result of our whole being rather than a part of our nature, and at any rate is the region of our most subtle sympathies and antipathies.

It may be said that if the great principles of Christianity were attended to, all such rules, suggestions, and observations as the above would be needless. True enough! Great principles are at the bottom of all things; but

to apply them to daily life, many little rules, precautions, and insights are needed. Such things hold a middle place between real life and principles, as form does between matter and spirit: moulding the one and expressing the other.

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

BORN 1819—DIED 1875.

MY WINTER GARDEN.

By CHARLES KINGSLEY.

SO, my friend: you ask me to tell you how I contrive to support this monotonous country life; how, fond as I am of excitement, adventure, society, scenery, art, literature, I go cheerfully through the daily routine of a commonplace country profession, never requiring a six-weeks' holiday; not caring to see the Continent, hardly even to spend a day in London; having never yet actually got to Paris.

You wonder why I do not grow dull as those round me, whose talk is of bullocks—as indeed mine is, often enough; why I am not by this time "all over blue mould"; why I have not been tempted to bury myself in my study, and live a life of dreams among old books.

I will tell you. I am a minute philosopher: though one, thank Heaven, of a different stamp from him whom the great Bishop Berkeley silenced—alas! only for a while. I am possibly, after all, a man of small mind, content with

small pleasures. So much the better for me. Meanwhile, I can understand your surprise, though you cannot understand my content. You have played a greater game than mine; have lived a life perhaps more fit for an Englishman, certainly more in accordance with the taste of our common fathers, the Vikings, and their patron Odin "the goer," father of all them that go ahead. You have gone ahead, and over many lands; and I reverence you for it, though I envy you not. You have commanded a regiment—indeed an army, and "drank delight of battle with your peers"; you have ruled provinces, and done justice and judgment, like a noble Englishman as you are, old friend, among thousands who never knew before what justice and judgment were. You have tasted (and you have deserved to taste) the joy of old David's psalm, when he has hunted down the last of the robber lords of Palestine. You have seen "a people whom you have not known, serve you. As soon as they heard of you, they obeyed you; but the strange children dissembled with you": yet before you, too, "the strange children failed, and trembled in their hill-forts."

Noble work that was to do, and nobly you

have done it; and I do not wonder that to a man who has been set to such a task, and given power to carry it through, all smaller work must seem paltry; that such a man's very amusements, in that grand Indian land, and that free adventurous Indian life, exciting the imagination, calling out all the self-help and daring of a man, should have been on a par with your work; that when you go a sporting, you ask for no meaner preserve than the primeval forest, no lower park wall than the snow-peaks of the Himalaya.

Yes; you have been a "burra Shikarree" as well as a "burra Sahib." You have played the great game in your work, and killed the great game in your play. How many tons of mighty monsters have you done to death, since we two were school-boys together, five-and-twenty years ago? How many starving villages have you fed with the flesh of elephant or buffalo? How many have you delivered from man-eating tigers, or wary old alligators, their craws full of poor girls' bangles? Have you not been charged by rhinoceroses, all but ripped up by boars? Have you not seen face to face Ovis Ammon himself, the giant mountain sheep—primeval ancestor, perhaps, of all the

flocks on earth? Your memories must be like those of Theseus and Hercules, full of slain monsters. Your brains must be one fossiliferous deposit, in which gaur and sambur, hog and tiger, rhinoceros and elephant, lie heaped together, as the old ichthyosaurs and plesiosaurs are heaped in the lias rocks at Lyme. And therefore I like to think of you. I try to picture your feelings to myself. I spell over with my boy Mayne Reid's amusing books, or the "Old Forest Ranger," or Williams' old "Tiger Book," with Howitt's plates; and try to realize the glory of a burra Shikarree: and as I read and imagine, feel, with Sir Hugh Evans, "a great dispositions to cry."

For there were times, full many a year ago, when my brains were full of bison and grizzly bear, mustang, and big-horn, Blackfoot and Pawnee, and hopes of wild adventure in the Far West, which I shall never see; for ere I was three-and-twenty, I discovered, plainly enough, that my lot was to stay at home and earn my bread in a very quiet way; that England was to be henceforth my prison or my palace as I should choose to make it; and I have made it, by Heaven's help, the latter.

I will confess to you, though, that in those

first heats of youth, this little England—or rather this little patch of moor in which I have struck roots as firm as the wild fir-trees do—looked at moments rather like a prison than a palace; that my foolish young heart would sigh, "Oh! that I had wings"—not as a dove, to fly home to its nest and croodle there—but as an eagle, to swoop away over land and sea, in a rampant and self-glorifying fashion, on which I now look back as altogether unwholesome and undesirable. But the thirst for adventure and excitement was strong in me, as perhaps it ought to be in all at twenty-one. Others went out to see the glorious new worlds of the West, the glorious old worlds of the East—why should not I? Others rambled over Alps and Apennines, Italian picture-galleries and palaces, filling their minds with fair memories—why should not I? Others discovered new wonders in botany and zoölogy—why should not I? Others too, like you, fulfilled to the utmost that strange lust after the burra shikar, which even now makes my pulse throb as often as I see the stags' heads in our friend A——'s hall—why should not I"? It is not learned in a day, the golden lesson of the old Collect, to "love the thing which is com-

manded, and desire that which is promised." Not in a day, but in fifteen years one can spell out a little of its worth; and when one finds one's self on the wrong side of forty, and the first gray hairs begin to show on the temples, and one can no longer jump as high as one's third button—scarcely, alas! to any button at all; and what with innumerable sprains, bruises, soakings, and chillings, one's lower limbs feel in a cold thaw, much like an old post-horse's, why, one makes a virtue of necessity: and if one still lusts after sights, takes the nearest, and looks for wonders, not in the Himalayas or Lake Ngami, but in the turf on the lawn and the brook in the park; and with good Alphonse Karr enjoys the macro-microcosm in one "Tour autour de mon jardin."

For there it is, friend, the whole infinite miracle of nature in every tuft of grass, if we have only eyes to see it, and can disabuse our minds of that tyrannous phantom of size. Only recollect that great and small are but relative terms; that, in truth, nothing is great or small, save in proportion to the quantity of creative thought which has been exercised in making it; that the fly who basks upon one of the trilithons of Stonehenge, is in truth infinitely

greater than all Stonehenge together, though he may measure the tenth of an inch, and the stone on which he sits five-and-twenty feet. You differ from me? Be it so. Even if you prove me wrong I will believe myself in the right: I cannot afford to do otherwise. If you rob me of my faith in "minute philosophy," you rob me of a continual source of content, surprise, delight.

So go your way and I mine, each working with all his might, and playing with all his might, in his own place and way. Remember only, that though I never can come round to your sphere, you must some day come round to me, when wounds, or weariness, or merely, as I hope, a healthy old age, shall shut you out for once and for all from burra shikar, whether human or quadruped.—For you surely will not take to politics in your old age? You will not surely live to solicit (as many a fine fellow, alas! did but last year) the votes, not even of the people, but merely of the snobocracy, on the ground of your having neither policy nor principles, nor even opinions, upon any matter in heaven or earth?—Then in that day will you be forced, my friend, to do what I have done this many a year: to refrain your soul, and

keep it low. You will see more and more the depth of human ignorance, the vanity of human endeavors. You will feel more and more that the world is going God's way, and not yours, or mine, or any man's; and that if you have been allowed to do good work on earth, that work is probably as different from what you fancy it as the tree is from the seed whence it springs. You will grow content, therefore, not to see the real fruit of your labors; because if you saw it you would probably be frightened at it, and what is very good in the eyes of God would not be very good in yours; content, also, to receive your discharge, and work and fight no more, sure that God is working and fighting, whether you are in hospital or in the field. And with this growing sense of the pettiness of human struggles will grow on you a respect for simple labors, a thankfulness for simple pleasures, a sympathy with simple people, and possibly, my trusty friend, with me and my little tours about that moorland which I call my winter-garden, and which is to me as full of glory and of instruction as the Himalaya or the Punjab are to you, and in which I contrive to find as much health and amusement as I have time for—and who ought to have more?

I call the said garden mine, not because I own it in any legal sense (for only in a few acres have I a life interest), but in that higher sense in which ten thousand people can own the same thing, and yet no man's right interfere with another's. To whom does the Apollo Belvedere belong, but to all who have eyes to see its beauty? So does my winter garden; and therefore to me among the rest.

Besides (which is a gain to a poor man), my pleasure in it is a very cheap one. So are all those of a minute philosopher, except his microscope. But my winter garden, which is far larger, at all events, than that famous one at Chatsworth, costs me not one penny in keeping up. Poor, did I call myself? Is it not true wealth to have all I want without paying for it? Is it not true wealth, royal wealth, to have some twenty gentlemen and noblemen, nay, even royal personages, planting and improving for me? Is it not more than royal wealth to have sun and frost, gulf-stream and south-westers, laws of geology, phytology, physiology, and other ologies—in a word, the whole universe and the powers thereof, day and night, paving, planting, roofing, lighting, coloring my winter garden for me, without my even having

the trouble to rub a magic ring and tell the genii to go to work.

Yes. I am very rich, as every man may be who will. In the doings of our little country neighborhood I find tragedy and comedy, too fantastic, sometimes too sad, to be written down. In the words of those whose talk is of bullocks I find the materials of all possible metaphysic, and long weekly that I had time to work them out. In fifteen miles of moorland I find the materials of all possible physical science, and long that I had time to work out one smallest segment of that great sphere. How can I be richer, if I have lying at my feet all day a thousand times more wealth than I can use?

Some people—most people—in these run-about railway days, would complain of such a life, in such a "narrow sphere," so they call it, as monotonous. Very likely it is so, But is it to be complained of on that account? Is monotony in itself an evil? Which is better, to know many places ill or to know one place well? Certainly—if a scientific habit of mind be a gain—it is only by exhausting as far as possible the significance of an individual phenomenon (is not that sentence a true scientific

one in its magniloquence?) that you can discover any glimpse of the significance of the universal. Even men of boundless knowledge, like Humboldt, must have had once their specialty, their pet subject, or they would have, strictly speaking, no knowledge at all. The volcanoes of Mexico, patiently and laboriously investigated in his youth, were to Humboldt, possibly, the key of the whole Cosmos. I learn more, studying over and over again the same Bagshot sand and gravel heaps, than I should by roaming all Europe in search of new geologic wonders. Fifteen years have I been puzzling at the same questions and have only guessed at a few of the answers. What sawed out the edges of the moors into long narrow banks of gravel? What cut them off all flat atop? What makes *Erica tetralix* grow in one soil and the bracken in another? How did three species of club-moss—one of them quite an Alpine one—get down here, all the way from Wales perhaps, upon this isolated patch of gravel? Why did that one patch of *Carex arenaria* settle in the only square yard for miles and miles which bore sufficient resemblance to its native sand-hill by the sea-shore, to make it comfortable? Why did *Myosurus*

minimus, which I had hunted for in vain for fourteen years, appear by dozens in the fifteenth, upon a new-made bank, which had been for at least two hundred years a farm-yard gateway? Why does it generally rain here from the southwest, not when the barometer falls, but when it begins to rise again? Why—why is every thing, which lies under my feet all day long? I don't know; and you can't tell me. And till I have found out, I cannot complain of monotony, with still undiscovered puzzles waiting to be explained, and so to create novelty at every turn.

Besides monotony is pleasant in itself; morally pleasant, and morally useful. Marriage is monotonous; but there is much, I trust, to be said in favor of holy wedlock. Living in the same house is monotonous; but three removes, say the wise, are as bad as a fire. Locomotion is regarded as an evil by our Litany. The Litany, as usual, is right. "Those who travel by land or sea" are to be objects of our pity and our prayers; and I do pity them. I delight in that same monotony. It saves curiosity, anxiety, excitement, disappointment, and a host of bad passions. It gives the man the blessed, invigorating feeling that he is at home; that he has

roots, deep and wide, struck down into all he sees; and that only The Being who will do nothing cruel or useless can tear them up. It is pleasant to look down on the same parish day after day, and say, I know all that lies beneath, and all beneath know me. If I want a friend, I know where to find him; if I want work done, I know who will do it. It is pleasant and good to see the same trees year after year; the same birds coming back in spring to the same shrubs; the same banks covered with the same flowers, and broken (if they be stiff ones) by the same gaps. Pleasant and good it is to ride the same horse, to sit in the same chair, to wear the same old coat. That man who offered twenty pounds' reward for a lost carpet-bag full of old boots was a sage, and I wish I knew him. Why should one change one's place any more than one's wife or one's children? Is a hermit-crab, slipping his tail out of one strange shell into another, in the hopes of its fitting him a little better, either a dignified, safe, or graceful animal? No; George Riddler was a true philosopher:

> "Let vules go sarching vur and nigh,
> We bides at Whum, my dog and I";

and become there, not only wiser, but more charitable; for the oftener one sees, the better one knows; and the better one knows, the more one loves.

It is an easy philosophy; especially in the case of the horse, where a man cannot afford more than one, as I cannot. To own a stud of horses, after all, is not to own horses at all, but riding-machines. Your rich man who rides Crimæa in the morning, Sir Guy in the afternoon, and Sultan to-morrow, and something else the next day, may be a very gallant rider; but it is a question whether he enjoys the pleasure which one horse gives to the poor man who rides him day after day; one horse, who is not a slave, but a friend; who has learned all his tricks of voice, hand, heel, and knows what his master wants, even without being told; who will bear with his master's infirmities, and feels secure that his master will bear with his in turn.

Possibly, after all, the grapes are sour; and were one rich, one would do even as the rich are wont to do: but still, I am a minute philosopher. And therefore, this afternoon, after I have done the same work, visited the same people, and said the same words to them,

which I have done for years past, and shall, I trust, for many a year to come, I shall go wandering out into the same winter garden on the same old mare; and think the same thoughts, and see the same fir-trees, and meet perhaps the same good-fellows hunting of their fox, as I have done with full content this many a year; and rejoice, as I said before, in my own boundless wealth, who have the whole universe to look at, without being charged one penny for the show.

As I have said, the grapes may be sour, and I enjoy the want of luxuries only because I cannot get them; but if my self-deception be useful to me, leave it alone.

No one is less inclined to depreciate that magnificent winter-garden at the Crystal Palace: yet let me, if I choose, prefer my own; I argue that, in the first place, it is far larger. You may drive, I hear, through the grand one at Chatsworth for a quarter of a mile. You may ride through mine for fifteen miles on end. I prefer, too, to any glass roof which Sir Joseph Paxton ever planned, that dome above my head some three miles high, of soft dappled gray and yellow cloud, through the vast lattice-work whereof the blue sky peeps,

and sheds down tender gleams on yellow bogs, and softly rounded heather knolls, and pale chalk ranges gleaming far away. But, above all, I glory in my evergreens. What winter garden can compare for them with mine? True, I have but four kinds—Scotch fir, holly, furze, and the heath; and by way of relief to them, only brows of brown fern, sheets of yellow bog-grass, and here and there a leafless birch, whose purple tresses are even more lovely to my eye than those fragrant green ones which she puts on in spring. Well: in painting as in music, what effects are more grand than those produced by the scientific combination, in endless new variety, of a few simple elements? Enough for me is the one purple birch; the bright hollies round its stem sparkling with scarlet beads; the furze-patch, rich with its lace-work of interwoven light and shade, tipped here and there with a golden bud; the deep soft heather carpet, which invites you to lie down and dream for hours; and behind all, the wall of red fir-stems, and the dark fir-roof with its jagged edges a mile long, against the soft gray sky.

An ugly, straight-edged, monotonous fir-plantation? Well, I like it, outside and in-

side. I need no saw-edge of mountain peaks to stir up my imagination with the sense of the sublime, while I can watch the saw-edge of those fir peaks against the red sunset. They are my Alps; little ones it may be: but after all, as I asked before, what is size? A phantom of our brain; an optical delusion. Grandeur, if you will consider wisely, consists in form, and not in size: and to the eye of the philosopher, the curve drawn on a paper two inches long, is just as magnificent, just as symbolic of divine mysteries and melodies, as when embodied in the span of some cathedral roof. Have you eyes to see? Then lie down on the grass, and look near enough to see something more of what is to be seen; and you will find tropic jungles in every square foot of turf; mountain cliffs and debacles at the mouth of every rabbit burrow: dark strids, tremendous cataracts, "deep glooms and sudden glories," in every foot-broad rill which wanders through the turf. All is there for you to see, if you will but rid yourself of "that idol of space"; and Nature, as every one will tell you who has seen dissected an insect under the microscope, is as grand and graceful in her smallest as in her hugest forms.

The March breeze is chilly: but I can be always warm if I like in my winter garden. I turn my horse's head to the red wall of fir-stems, and leap over the furze-grown bank into my cathedral, wherein if there be no saints, there are likewise no priestcraft and no idols; but endless vistas of smooth, red, green-veined shafts holding up the warm dark roof, lessening away into endless gloom, paved with rich brown fir-needle—a carpet at which Nature has been at work for forty years. Red shafts, green roof, and here and there a pane of blue sky—neither Owen Jones nor Willement can improve upon that ecclesiastical ornamentation,—while for incense I have the fresh healthy turpentine fragrance, far sweeter to my nostrils than the stifling narcotic odor which fills a Roman Catholic cathedral. There is not a breath of air within: but the breeze sighs over the roof above in a soft whisper. I shut my eyes and listen. Surely that is the murmur of the summer sea upon the summer sands in Devon far away. I hear the innumerable wavelets spend themselves gently upon the shore, and die away to rise again. And with the innumerable wave-sighs come innumerable memories, and faces which I shall never see

again upon this earth. I will not tell even you of that, old friend.

It has two notes, two keys rather, that Eolian-harp of fir-needles above my head; according as the wind is east or west, the needles dry or wet. This easterly key of to-day is shriller, more cheerful, warmer in sound, though the day itself be colder: but grander still, as well as softer, is the sad soughing key in which the southwest wind roars on, rain-laden, over the forest, and calls me forth—being a minute philosopher—to catch trout in the nearest chalk-stream.

The breeze is gone a while; and I am in perfect silence—a silence which may be heard. Not a sound; and not a moving object; absolutely none. The absence of animal life is solemn, startling. That ringdove, who was cooing half a mile away, has hushed his moan; that flock of long-tailed titmice, which were twinging and pecking about the fir-cones a few minutes since, are gone: and now there is not even a gnat to quiver in the slant sun-rays. Did a spider run over these dead leaves, I almost fancy I could hear his footfall. The creaking of the saddle, the soft step of the mare upon the fir-needles, jar my ears. I

seem alone in a dead world. A dead world: and yet so full of life, if I had eyes to see! Above my head every fir-needle is breathing—breathing forever; currents unnumbered circulate in every bough, quickened by some undiscovered miracle; around me every fir-stem is distilling strange juices, which no laboratory of man can make; and where my dull eye sees only death, the eye of God sees boundless life and motion, health and use.

Slowly I wander on beneath the warm roof of the winter garden, and meditate upon that one word—Life; and specially on all that Mr. Lewes has written so well thereon—for instance—

"We may consider Life itself as an ever-increasing identification with Nature. The simple cell, from which the plant or animal arises, must draw light and heat from the sun, nutriment from the surrounding world, or else it will remain quiescent, not alive, though latent with life; as the grains in the Egyptian tombs, which after lying thousands of years in those sepulchres, are placed in the earth, and smile forth as golden wheat. What we call growth, is it not a perpetual absorption of Nature, the identification of the individual with the universal? And may we not, in speculative moods, consider Death as the grand impatience of the soul to free itself from the circle of individual activity—the yearning of the creature to be united with the Creator?

"As with Life, so with knowledge, which is intellectual life.

In the early days of man's history, Nature and her marvellous ongoings were regarded with but a casual and careless eye, or else with the merest wonder. It was late before profound and reverent study of her laws could wean man from impatient speculations; and now, what is our intellectual activity based on, except on the more thorough mental absorption of Nature? When that absorption is completed, the mystic drama will be sunny clear, and all Nature's processes be visible to man, as a Divine Effluence and Life."

True: yet not all the truth. But who knows all the truth?

Not I. "We see through a glass darkly," said St. Paul of old; and what is more, dazzle and weary our eyes, like clumsy microscopists, by looking too long and earnestly through the imperfect and by no means achromatic lens. Enough. I will think of something else. I will think of nothing at all——

Stay. There was a sound at last; a light footfall.

A hare races toward us through the ferns, her great bright eyes full of terror, her ears aloft to catch some sound behind. She sees us, turns short, and vanishes into the gloom. The mare pricks up her ears too, listens, and looks; but not the way the hare has gone. There is something more coming; I can trust the finer sense of the horse, to which (and no

wonder) the Middle Age attributed the power of seeing ghosts and fairies impalpable to man's gross eyes. Besides, that hare was not travelling in search of food. She was not loping along, looking around to her right and left; but galloping steadily. She has been frightened; she has been put up: but what has put her up? And there, far away among the fir-stems, rings the shriek of a startled blackbird. What has put him up?

That, old mare, at sight whereof your wise eyes widen till they are ready to burst, and your ears are first shot forward toward your nose, and then laid back with vicious intent. Stand still, old woman! Do you think still, after fifteen winters, that you can catch a fox?

A fox it is indeed; a great dog-fox, as red as the fir-stems between which he glides. And yet his legs are black with fresh peat-stains.

He is a hunted fox; but he has not been up long.

The mare stands like a statue; but I can feel her trembling between my knees. Positively he does not see us. He sits down in the middle of a ride, turns his great ears right and left, and then scratches one of them with his hind foot, seemingly to made it hear the better. Now he is up again and on.

Beneath yon firs, some hundred yards away, standeth, or rather lieth, for it is on dead flat ground, the famous castle of Malepartus, which beheld the base murder of Lampe the hare, and many a seely soul besides. I knew it well; a patch of sand-heaps, mingled with great holes, amid the twining fir-roots; ancient home of the last of the wild beasts. And thither, unto Malepartus safe and strong, trots Reinecke, where he hopes to be snug among the labyrinthine windings, and innumerable starting-holes, as the old apologue has it, of his ballium, covert-way, and donjon keep. Full blown in self-satisfaction he trots, lifting his toes delicately, and carrying his brush aloft, as full of cunning and conceit as that world-famous ancestor of his, whose deeds of unchivalry were the delight, if not the model, of knight and kaiser, lady and burgher, in the Middle Age.

Suddenly he halts at the great gate of Malepartus; examines it with his nose; goes on to a postern; examines that also, and then another, and another; while I perceive afar, projecting from every cave's mouth, the red and green end of a new fir-faggot. Ah, Reinecke! fallen is thy conceit, and fallen thy tail therewith. Thou hast worse foes to deal with than

Bruin the bear, or Isegrim the wolf, or any foolish brute whom thy great ancestor outwitted. Man the many-counselled has been beforehand with thee; and the earths are stopped.

One moment he sits down to meditate, and scratches those trusty counsellors, his ears, as if he would tear them off, "revolving swift thoughts in a crafty mind."

He has settled it now. He is up and off—and at what a pace! Out of the way Fauns and Hamadryads, if any be left in the forest. What a pace! And with what a grace besides!

O Reinecke, beautiful thou art, of a surety, in spite of thy great naughtiness! Art thou some fallen spirit, doomed to be hunted for thy sins in this life, and in some future life rewarded for thy swiftness, and grace, and cunning, by being made a very messenger of the immortals? Who knows? Not I.

I am rising fast to Pistol's vein. Shall I ejaculate? Shall I notify? Shall I waken the echoes? Shall I break the grand silence by that scream which the vulgar view-halloo call?

It is needless; for louder and louder every moment swells up a sound which makes my heart leap into my mouth, and my mare into the air.

Music? Well-beloved soul of Hullah, would that thou wert here this day, and not in St. Martin's Hall, to hear that chorus, as it pours round the fir-stems, rings against the roof above, shatters up into a hundred echoes, till the air is alive with sound! You love madrigals, and whatever Weekes, or Wilbye, or Orlando Gibbons sang of old. So do I. Theirs is music fit for men: worthy of the age of heroes, of Drake and Raleigh, Spenser and Shakespeare: but oh that you could hear this madrigal! If you must have "four parts," then there they are. Deep-mouthed bass, rolling along the ground; rich joyful tenor; wild wistful alto; and leaping up here and there above the throng of sounds, delicate treble shrieks and trills of trembling joy. I know not whether you can fit it into your laws of music, any more than you can the song of that Ariel sprite who dwells in the Eolian harp, or the roar of the waves on the rock, or

> "Myriads of rivulets hurrying through the lawn,
> And murmuring of innumerable bees."

But music it is. A madrigal? Rather a whole opera of Der Freischutz—demoniac element and all—to judge by those red lips,

fierce eyes, wild, hungry voices; and such as should make Reinecke, had he strong æsthetic sympathies, well content to be hunted from his cradle to his grave, that such sweet sounds might by him enrich the air. Heroes of old were glad to die, if but some "vates-sacer" would sing their fame in worthy strains: and shalt not thou too be glad, Reinecke? Content thyself with thy fate. Music soothes care; let it soothe thine, as thou runnest for thy life; thou shalt have enough of it in the next hour. For as the Etruscans (says Athenæus) were so luxurious that they used to flog their slaves to the sound of the flute, so shall luxurious Chanter and Challenger, Sweetlips and Melody, eat thee to the sound of rich organ-pipes, that so thou mayest,

> "Like that old fabled swan, in music die."

And now appear, dim at first and distant, but brightening and nearing fast, many a right good-fellow and many a right good horse. I know three out of four of them, their private histories, the private histories of their horses: and could tell you many a good story of them: but shall not, being an English gentleman, and not an American littérateur. They may not all

be very clever, or very learned, or very any thing except gallant men; but they are all good enough company for me, or any one; and each has his own specialité, for which I like him. That huntsman I have known for fifteen years, and sat many an hour beside his father's death-bed. I am godfather to that whip's child. I have seen the servants of the hunt, as I have the hounds, grow up round me for two generations, and I feel for them as old friends; and like to look into their brave, honest, weather-beaten faces. That red coat there, I knew him when he was a school-boy; and now he is a captain in the Guards, and won his Victoria Cross at Inkermann: that bright-green coat is the best farmer, as well as the hardest rider, for many a mile round; one who plays, as he works, with all his might, and might have been a beau sabreur and colonel of dragoons. So might that black coat, who now brews good beer, and stands up for the poor at the Board of Guardians, and rides, like the green coat, as well as he works. That other black coat is a county banker; but he knows more of the fox than the fox knows of himself, and where the hounds are, there will he be this day. That red coat has hunted kangaroo in

Australia: that one, as clever and good as he is brave and simple, has stood by Napier's side in many an Indian fight: that one won his Victoria at Delhi, and was cut up at Lucknow, with more than twenty wounds: that one has —but what matter to you who each man is? Enough that each can tell one a good story, welcome one cheerfully, and give one out here, in the wild forest, the wholesome feeling of being at home among friends.

There is music, again, if you will listen, in the soft tread of these hundred horse-hoofs upon the spongy vegetable soil. They are trotting now in "common time." You may hear the whole Croats' March (the finest trotting march in the world) played by those iron heels; the time, as it does in the Croats' March, breaking now and then, plunging, jingling, struggling through heavy ground, bursting for a moment into a jubilant canter as it reaches a sound spot.

The hounds feather a moment round Malepartus, puzzled by the windings of Reinecke's footsteps. You can hear the flap and snort of the dogs' nostrils as they canter round; and one likes it. It is exciting: but why—who can tell?

What beautiful creatures they are too! Next to a Greek statue (I mean a real old Greek one: for I am a thoroughly anti-pre-Raphaelite benighted pagan heathen in taste, and intend some day to get up a Cinque-Cento Club, for the total abolition of Gothic art)—next to a Greek statue, I say, I know few such combinations of grace and strength as in a fine fox-hound. It is the beauty of the Theseus—light and yet massive; and light not in spite of its masses, but on account of the perfect disposition of them. I do not care for grace in man, woman, or animal, which is obtained (as in the old German painters) at the expense of honest flesh and blood. It may be all very pure, and unearthly, and saintly, and what not; but it is not healthy; and, therefore, it is not really High Art, let it call itself such as much as it likes. The highest art must be that in which the outward is the most perfect symbol of the inward; and, therefore, a healthy soul can be only expressed by a healthy body; and starved limbs and a hydrocephalous forehead must be either taken as incorrect symbols of spiritual excellence, or as—what they were really meant for—symbols of certain spiritual diseases which were in the Middle Age con-

sidered as ecclesiastical graces and virtues. Wherefore I like pagan and naturalist art; consider Titian and Correggio as unappreciated geniuses, whose excellences the world will in some saner mood rediscover; hold, in direct opposition to Rio, that Raphael improved steadily all his life through, and that his noblest works are not his somewhat simpering Madonnas and somewhat impish Bambinos (very lovely though they are), but his great, coarse, naturalist, Protestant cartoons, which (with Andrea Mantegna's Heathen Triumph) Cromwell saved for the British nation. Probably no one will agree with all this for the next quarter of a century; but after that I have hopes. The world will grow tired of pretending to admire Manichæan pictures in an age of natural science; and Art will let the dead bury their dead, and beginning again where Michael Angelo and Raphael left off, work forward into a nobler, truer, freer, and more divine school than the world has yet seen—at least, so I hope.

And all this has grown out of those fox-hounds. Why not? Theirs is the sort of form which expresses to me what I want Art to express—Nature not limited, but developed, by high civilization. The old savage ideal of

beauty was the lion, type of mere massive force. That was succeeded by an over-civilized ideal, say the fawn, type of delicate grace. By cunning breeding and choosing, through long centuries, man has combined both, and has created the fox-hound,—lion and fawn in one; just as he might create noble human beings, did he take half as much trouble about politics (in the true old sense of the word) as he does about fowls. Look at that old hound, who stands doubtful, looking up at his master for advice. Look at the severity, delicacy, lightness of every curve. His head is finer than a deer's; his hind legs tense as steel springs; his fore-legs straight as arrows: and yet see the depth of chest, the sweep of loin, the breadth of paw, the mass of arm and thigh; and if you have an eye for form, look at the absolute majesty of his attitude at this moment. Majesty is the only word for it. If he were six feet high, instead of twenty-three inches, with what animal on earth could you compare him? Is it not a joy to see such a thing alive? It is to me, at least. I shouid like to have one in my study all day long, as I would have a statue or a picture; and when Mr. Morrell gave (as they say) two hundred guineas for Hercules alone, I be-

lieve the dog was well worth the money, only to look at. But I am a minute philosopher.

I cap them on to the spot at which Reinecke disappeared. Old Virginal's stern flourishes; instantly her pace quickens. One whimper, and she is away full-mouthed through the wood, and the pack after her: but not I.

I am not going with them. My hunting days are over. Let it suffice that I have, in the days of my vanity, "drunk delight of battle with my peers, far on the ringing plains" of many a county, grass and forest, down and vale. No, my gallant friends. You know that I could ride, if I chose; and I am vain enough to be glad that you know it. But useless are your coaxings, solicitations, wavings of honest right hands. "Life," as my friend Tom Brown says, "is not all beer and skittles"; it is past two now and I have four old women to read to at three, and an old man to bury at four; and I think, on the whole, that you will respect me the more for going home and doing my duty. That I should like to see this fox fairly killed, or even fairly lost, I deny not. That I should like it as much as I can like any earthly and outward thing, I deny not. But sugar to one's bread and butter is not

good; and if my winter garden represent the bread and butter, then will fox-hunting stand to it in the relation of superfluous and unwholesome sugar; so farewell; and long may your noble sport prosper—"the image of war with only half its danger," to train you and your sons after, into gallant soldiers—full of

> "The reason firm, the temperate will,
> Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill."

So homeward I go through a labyrinth of fir-stem and, what is worse, fir-stumps, which need both my eyes and my horse's at every moment; and woe to the "anchorite," as old Bunbury names him, who carries his nose in the air, and his fore feet well under him. Woe to the self-willed or hard-hided horse who cannot take the slightest hint of the heel, and wince hind legs or fore out of the way of those jagged points which lie in wait for him. Woe, in fact, to all who are clumsy or cowardly, or in anywise not "masters of the situation."

Pleasant riding it is, though, if you dare look anywhere but over your horse's nose, under the dark roof, between the red fir-pillars, in that rich subdued light. Now I plunge into a gloomy dell, wherein is no tinkling rivulet,

ever pure; but instead a bog, hewn out into a chess-board of squares, parted by deep narrow ditches some twenty feet apart. Blundering among the stems I go, fetlock-deep in peat, and jumping at every third stride one of the said uncanny gripes, half hidden in long hassock grass. O *Aira cæspitosa*, most stately and most variable of British grasses, why will you always grow where you are not wanted? Through you the mare all but left her hind legs in that last gripe. Through you a red coat ahead of me, avoiding one of your hassocks, jumped with his horse's nose full butt against a fir-stem, and stopped,

> "As one that is struck dead
> By lightning ere he falls,"

as we shall soon, in spite of the mare's cleverness. Would we were out of this!

Out of it we shall be soon. I see daylight ahead at last, bright between the dark stems. Up a steep slope, and over a bank which is not very big, but being composed of loose gravel and peat mould, gives down with me, nearly sending me head over heels in the heather, and leaving me a sheer gap to scramble through, and out on the open moor.

Grand old moor! stretching your brown flats right away toward Windsor for many a mile. Far to our right is the new Wellington College, looking stately enough here all alone in the wilderness, in spite of its two ugly towers and pinched waist. Close over me is the long fir-fringed ride of Easthampstead, ending suddenly in Cæsar's camp; and hounds and huntsmen are already far ahead, and racing up the Roman road, which the clods of these parts, unable to give a better account of it, call the Devil's Highway.

Racing indeed; for as Reinecke gallops up the narrow heather-fringed pathway, he brushes off his scent upon the twigs at every stride; and the hounds race after him, showing no head indeed, and keeping, for convenience, in one long line upon the track: but going heads up, sterns down, at a pace which no horse can follow. I only hope they may not overrun the scent.

They have overrun it; halt, and put their heads down a moment. But with one swift cast in full gallop they have hit it off again, fifty yards away in the heather, long ere the horsemen are up to them; for those hounds can hunt a fox because they are not hunted

themselves, and so have learned to trust themselves, and act for themselves; as boys should learn at school, even at the risk of a mistake or two. Now they are showing head indeed, down a half-cleared valley, and over a few ineffectual turnips withering in the peat, a patch of growing civilization in the heart of the wilderness; and then over the brook, while I turn slowly away, through a green wilderness of self-sown firs.

There they stand in thousands, the sturdy Scots, colonizing the desert in spite of frost, and gales, and barrenness; and clustering together, too, as Scotsmen always do abroad, little and big, every one under his neighbor's lee, according to the good old proverb of their native land, "Caw me, and I 'll caw thee."

I respect them, those Scotch firs. I delight in their forms, from James the First's gnarled giants up in Bramshill Park—the only place in England where a painter can learn what Scotch firs are—down to the little green pyramids which stand up out of the heather, triumphant over tyranny, and the strange woes of an untoward youth. Seven years on an average have most of them spent in ineffectual efforts to become a foot high. Nibbled off by hares,

trodden down by cattle, cut down by turf-parers, seeing hundreds of their brethren cut up and carried off in the turf-fuel, they are as gnarled and stubbed near the ground as an old thorn-bush in a pasture. But they have conquered at last, and are growing away, eighteen inches a year, with fair green brushes silver-tipped, reclothing the wilderness with a vegetation which it has not seen for—how many thousand years?

No man can tell. For when last the Scotch fir was indigenous to England, and, mixed with the larch, stretched in one vast forest from Norfolk into Wales, England was not as it is now. Snowdon was, it may be, fifteen thousand feet in height, and from the edges of its glaciers the marmot and the musk-ox, the elk and the bear, wandered down into the lowlands, and the hyena and the lion dwelt in those caves where fox and badger only now abide. And how did the Scotch fir die out? Did the whole land sink slowly from its sub-Alpine elevation into a warmer climate below? Or was it never raised at all? Did some change of the Atlantic sea-floor turn for the first time the warm gulf-stream to these shores; and with its soft sea-breezes melt away

the "Age of Ice," till glaciers and pines, marmots and musk oxen, perspired to death, and vanished for an æon? Who knows? Not I. But of the fact there can be no doubt. Whether, as we hold traditionally here, the Scotch fir was re-introduced by James the First when he built Bramshill for Raleigh's hapless pet, Henry the Prince, or whatever may have been the date of their re-introduction, here they are, and no one can turn them out. In countless thousands the winged seeds float down the southwest gales from the older trees; and every seed which falls takes root in ground which, however unable to bear broad-leaved trees, is ready by long rest for the seeds of the needle-leaved ones. Thousands perish yearly; but the eastward march of the whole, up hill and down dale, is sure and steady as that of Lynceus' Goths in Goethe's Helena:—

> "Ein lang und breites Volksgewicht,
> Der erste wusste vom letzen nicht.
>
> Der erste fiel, der zweite stand,
> Des dritten Lanze war zur Hand,
> Ein jeder hundertfach gestärkt;
> Erschlagene Tausend unbemerkt,"——

—till, as you stand upon some eminence, you see, stretching to the eastward of each tract of

older trees, a long cloud of younger ones, like a green comet's tail—I wish their substance was as yielding this day. Truly beautiful—grand indeed to me it is—to see young live Nature thus carrying on a great savage process in the heart of this old and seemingly all-artificial English land; and reproducing here, as surely as in the Australian bush, a native forest, careless of mankind. Still, I wish it were easier to ride through. Stiff are those Scotchmen, and close and stout they stand by each other, and claw at you as you twist through them, the biggest aiming at your head or, even worse, at your knees; while the middle-sized slip their brushes between your thigh and the saddle; and the little babies tickle your horse's stomach, or twine about his fore-feet. Whish—whish; we are enveloped in what seems an atmosphere of scrubbing-brushes. Fain would I shut my eyes: but dare not, or I shall ride against a tree. Whish—whish; alas for the horse which cannot wind and turn like a hare! Plunge—stagger. What is this? A broad line of ruts; perhaps some Celtic trackway, two thousand years old, now matted over with firs; dangerous enough out on the open moor, when only masked by a

line of higher and darker heath: but doubly dangerous now when masked by dark undergrowth. You must find your own way here, mare. I will positively have nothing to do with it. I disclaim all responsibility. There are the reins on your neck; do what you will, only do something—and if you can, get forward, and not back.

There is daylight at last, and fresh air. I trot contemptuously through the advanced skirmishers of the Scotch invading army; and watch my friends some mile and a half off, who have threaded a practicable trackway through a long dreary yellow bog, too wet for firs to root in, and are away in "a streamer." Now a streamer is produced in this wise. There is but one possible gap in a bank, one possible ford in a brook; one possible path in a cover; and as each man has to wait till the man before him gets through, and then gallops on, each man loses twenty yards or more on the man before him: wherefore, by all laws of known arithmetic, if ten men tail through a gap, then will the last of the ten find himself two hundred yards behind the foremost, which process several times repeated, produces the phenomenon called a streamer, viz., twenty

men galloping absurdly as hard as they can, in a line half a mile long, and in humors which are celestial in the few foremost, contented in the central, and gradually becoming darker in the hindmost; till in the last man they assume a hue altogether Tartarean. Farewell, brave gentlemen! I watch, half sadly, half self-contented, the red coats scattered like sparks of fire over hill and dale, and turn slowly homeward, to visit my old women.

I pass through a gateway, out upon a village green, planted with rows of oaks, surrounded by trim, sunny cottages, a pleasant oasis in the middle of the wilderness. Across the village cricket-ground—we are great cricketers in these parts, and long may the good old game live among us; and then up another hollow lane, which leads between damp shaughs and copses toward the further moor.

Curious things to a minute philosopher are these same hollow lanes. They set him on archæological questions, more than he can solve; and I meditate as I go, how many centuries it took to saw through the warm sand-banks this dyke ten feet deep, up which he trots, with the oak-boughs meeting over his head. Was it ever worth men's while to dig

out the soil? Surely not. The old method must have been, to remove the softer upper spit, till they got to tolerably hard ground; and then, Macadam's metal being as yet unknown, the rains and the wheels of generations sawed it gradually deeper and deeper, till this road-ditch was formed. But it must have taken centuries to do it. Many of these hollow lanes, especially those on flat ground, must be as old or older than the Conquest. In Devonshire I am sure that they are. But there many of them, one suspects, were made not of malice, but of cowardice prepense. Your indigenous Celt was, one fears, a sneaking animal, and liked to keep when he could under cover of banks and hill-sides; while your bold Roman made his raised roads straight over hill and dale, as "ridge-ways" from which, as from an eagle's eyrie, he could survey the conquered lowlands far and wide. It marks strongly the difference between the two races, that difference between the Roman paved road with its established common way for all passengers, its regular stations and milestones, and the Celtic trackway winding irresolutely along in innumerable ruts, parting to meet again, as if each savage (for they were little better) had taken

his own fresh path when he found the next line of ruts too heavy for his cattle. Around the spurs of Dartmoor I have seen many ancient roads, some of them long disused, which could have been hollowed out for no other purpose but that of concealment.

So I go slowly up the hill, till the valley lies beneath me like a long, green garden between its two banks of brown moor; and on through a cheerful little green, with red brick cottages scattered all round, each with its large, neat garden, and beehives, and pigs, and geese, and turf-stack, and clipped yews and hollies before the door, and rosy, dark-eyed children, and all the simple healthy comforts of a wild "heth-cropper's" home. When he can, the good-man of the house works at farm labor, or cuts his own turf; and when work is scarce, he cuts copses and makes heath-brooms, and does a little poaching. True, he seldom goes to church, save to be christened, married, or buried; but he equally seldom gets drunk. For church and public stand together two miles off; so that social wants sometimes bring their own compensations with them, and there are two sides to every question.

Hark! A faint, dreary hollo off the moor

above. And then another, and another. My friends may trust it; for the clod of these parts delights in the chase like any bare-legged Paddy, and casts away flail and fork wildly, to run, shout, assist, and interfere in all possible ways, out of pure love. The descendant of many generations of broom-squires and deer-stealers, the instinct of sport is strong within him still, though no more of the king's deer are to be shot in the winter turnip-fields, or worse, caught by an apple-baited hook hung from an orchard bough. He now limits his aspirations to hares and pheasants, and too probably once in his life, "hits the keeper into the river," and reconsiders himself for a while after over a crank in Winchester gaol. Well, he has his faults; and I have mine. But he is a thorough good-fellow nevertheless; quite as good as I: civil, contented, industrious, and often very handsome; and a far shrewder fellow too—owing to his dash of wild forest blood, from gypsy, highwayman, and what not—than his bullet-headed and flaxen-polled cousin, the pure South-Saxon of the Chalk-downs. Dark-haired he is, ruddy, and tall of bone; swaggering in his youth; but when he grows old, a thorough gentleman, reserved, stately, and courteous as

a prince. Sixteen years have I lived with him hail fellow well met, and never yet had a rude word or action from him.

With him I have cast in my lot, to live and die, and be buried by his side; and to him I go home contented, to look after his petty interests, cares, sorrows—petty truly, seeing that they include the whole primal mysteries of life—food, raiment, and work to earn them withal; love and marriage, birth and death, right-doing and wrong-doing, "Schicksal und eigene Schuld"; and all those commonplaces of humanity which in the eyes of a minute philosopher are most divine, because they are most commonplace—catholic as the sunshine and the rain which come down from the Heavenly Father, alike upon the evil and the good. As for doing fine things, my friend, with you, I have learned to believe that I am not set to do fine things, simply because I am not able to do them; and as for seeing fine things, with you, I have learned to see the sight—as well as to try to do the duty—which lies nearest me; and to comfort myself with the fancy that if I make good use of my eyes and brain in this life, I shall see—if it be of any use to me—all the fine things, or perhaps finer still, in the life

to come. But if not—what matter? In any life, in any state, however simple or humble, there will be always sufficient to occupy a Minute Philosopher: and if a man be busy, and busy about his duty, what more does he require, for time or for eternity?

GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS,

BORN 1824.

"OUR BEST SOCIETY."

IF gilt were only gold, or sugar-candy common sense, what a fine thing our society would be! If to lavish money upon *objets de vertu*, to wear the most costly dresses, and always to have them cut in the height of fashion; to build houses thirty feet broad, as if they were palaces; to furnish them with all the luxurious devices of Parisian genius; to give superb banquets, at which your guests laugh, and which make you miserable; to drive a fine carriage and ape European liveries, and crests, and coats-of-arms; to resent the friendly advances of your baker's wife, and the lady of your butcher (you being yourself a cobbler's daughter); to talk much of the "old families" and of your aristocratic foreign friends; to despise labor; to prate of "good society"; to travesty and parody, in every conceivable way, a society which we know only in books and by the superficial observation of foreign travel, which arises out of a social organization en-

tirely unknown to us, and which is opposed to our fundamental and essential principles: if all these were fine, what a prodigiously fine society would ours be!

This occurred to us upon lately receiving a card of invitation to a brilliant ball. We were quietly ruminating over our evening fire, with Disraeli's Wellington speech, "all tears," in our hands, with the account of a great man's burial, and a little man's triumph across the channel. So many great men gone, we mused, and such great crises impending! This democratic movement in Europe; Kossuth and Mazzini waiting for the moment to give the word; the Russian bear watchfully sucking his paws; the Napoleonic empire redivivus; Cuba, and annexation, and slavery; California and Australia, and the consequent considerations of political economy; dear me! exclaimed we, putting on a fresh hodful of coal, we must look a little into the state of parties.

As we put down the coal-scuttle, there was a knock at the door. We said, "come in," and in came a neat Alhambra-watered envelope, containing the announcement that the queen of fashion was "at home" that evening week. Later in the evening, came a friend to smoke a

cigar. The card was lying upon the table, and he read it with eagerness. "You 'll go, of course," said he, "for you will meet all the 'best society.'"

Shall we truly? Shall we really see the "best society of the city," the picked flower of its genius, character, and beauty? What makes the "best society" of men and women? The noblest specimens of each, of course. The men who mould the time, who refresh our faith in heroism and virtue, who make Plato, and Zeno, and Shakespeare, and all Shakespeare's gentlemen, possible again. The women, whose beauty, and sweetness, and dignity, and high accomplishment, and grace, make us understand the Greek mythology, and weaken our desire to have some glimpse of the most famous women of history. The "best society" is that in which the virtues are the most shining, which is the most charitable, forgiving, long-suffering, modest, and innocent. The "best society" is, by its very name, that in which there is the least hypocrisy and insincerity of all kinds, which recoils from, and blasts, artificiality, which is anxious to be all that it is possible to be, and which sternly reprobates all shallow pretence, all coxcombery and foppery, and in-

sists upon simplicity as the infallible characteristic of true worth. That is the "best society" which comprises the best men and women.

Had we recently arrived from the moon, we might, upon hearing that we were to meet the "best society," have fancied that we were about to enjoy an opportunity not to be overvalued. But unfortunately we were not so freshly arrived. We had received other cards, and had perfected our toilette many times, to meet this same society, so magnificently described, and had found it the least "best" of all. Who compose it? Whom shall we meet if we go to this ball? We shall meet three classes of persons: first, those who are rich, and who have all that money can buy; second, those who belong to what are technically called "the good old families," because some ancestor was a man of mark in the state or country, or was very rich, and has kept the fortune in the family; and, thirdly, a swarm of youths who can dance dexterously, and who are invited for that purpose. Now these are all arbitrary and factitious distinctions upon which to found so profound a social difference as that which exists in American, or, at least in New York, society. First, as a general rule, the rich men of every com-

munity, who make their own money, are not the most generally intelligent and cultivated. They have a shrewd talent which secures a fortune, and which keeps them closely at the work of amassing from their youngest years until they are old. They are sturdy men of simple tastes often. Sometimes, though rarely, very generous, but necessarily with an altogether false and exaggerated idea of the importance of money. They are a rather rough, unsympathetic, and, perhaps, selfish class, who, themselves, despise purple and fine linen, and still prefer a cot-bed and a bare room, although they may be worth millions. But they are married to scheming, or ambitious, or disappointed women, whose life is a prolonged pageant, and they are dragged hither and thither in it, are bled of their golden blood, and forced into a position they do not covet and which they despise. Then there are the inheritors of wealth. How many of them inherit the valiant genius and hard frugality which built up their fortunes; how many acknowledge the stern and heavy responsibility of their opportunities; how many refuse to dream their lives away in a Sybarite luxury; how many are smitten with the lofty ambition of achieving an enduring name by

works of a permanent value; how many do not dwindle into dainty dilettanti, and dilute their manhood with factitious sentimentality instead of a hearty, human sympathy; how many are not satisfied with having the fastest horses and the "crackest" carriages, and an unlimited wardrobe, and a weak affectation and puerile imitation of foreign life?

And who are these of our secondly, these "old families"? The spirit of our time and of our country knows no such thing, but the habitué of "society" hears constantly of "a good family." It means simply, the collective mass of children, grand-children, nephews, nieces, and descendants, of some man who deserved well of his country, and whom his country honors. But sad is the heritage of a great name! The son of Burke will inevitably be measured by Burke. The niece of Pope must show some superiority to other women (so to speak), or her equality is inferiority. The feeling of men attributes some magical charm to blood, and we look to see the daughter of Helen as fair as her mother, and the son of Shakespeare musical as his sire. If they are not so, if they are merely names, and common persons—if there is no Burke, nor Shakespeare,

nor Washington, nor Bacon, in their words, or actions, or lives, then we must pity them, and pass gently on, not upbraiding them, but regretting that it is one of the laws of greatness that it dwindles all things in its vicinity, which would otherwise show large enough. Nay, in our regard for the great man, we may even admit to a compassionate honor, as pensioners upon our charity, those who bear and transmit his name. But if these heirs should presume upon that fame, and claim any precedence of living men and women because their dead grandfather was a hero—they must be shown the door directly. We should dread to be born a Percy, or a Colonna, or a Bonaparte. We should not like to be the second Duke of Wellington, nor Charles Dickens, jr. It is a terrible thing, one would say, to a mind of honorable feeling, to be pointed out as somebody's son, or uncle, or granddaughter, as if the excellence were all derived. It must be a little humiliating to reflect that if your great uncle had not been somebody, you would be nobody—that, in fact, you are only a name, and that, if you should consent to change it for the sake of a fortune, as is sometimes done, you would cease to be any thing but a rich man. "My father

was President, or Governor of the State," some pompous man may say. But, by Jupiter! king of gods and men, what are *you?* is the instinctive response. Do you not see, our pompous friend, that you are only pointing your own unimportance? If your father was Governor of the State, what right have you to use that fact only to fatten your self-conceit? Take care, good care; for whether you say it by your lips or by your life, that withering response awaits you—"then what are *you?*" If your ancestor was great, you are under bonds to greatness. If you are small, make haste to learn it betimes, and, thanking heaven that your name has been made illustrious, retire into a corner and keep it, at least, untarnished.

Our thirdly is a class made by sundry French tailors, bootmakers, dancing-masters, and Mr. Brown. They are a corps-de-ballet, for the use of private entertainments. They are fostered by society for the use of young debutantes, and hardier damsels, who have dared two or three years of the "tight" polka. They are cultivated for their heels, not their heads. Their life begins at ten o'clock in the evening, and lasts until four in the morning. They go home and sleep until nine; then they reel,

sleepy, to counting-houses and offices, and doze on desks until dinner-time. Or, unable to do that, they are actively at work all day, and their cheeks grow pale, and their lips thin, and their eyes blood-shot and hollow, and they drag themselves home at evening to catch a nap until the ball begins, or to dine and smoke at their club, and be very manly with punches and coarse stories; and then to rush into hot and glittering rooms, and seize very *décolleté* girls closely around the waist, and dash with them around an area of stretched linen, saying in the panting pauses, "How very hot it is!" "How very pretty Miss Podge looks!" "What a good redowa!" "Are you going to Mrs. Potiphar's?"

Is this the assembled flower of manhood and womanhood, called "best society," and to see which is so envied a privilege? If such are the elements, can we be long in arriving at the present state and necessary future condition of parties?

"Vanity Fair" is peculiarly a picture of modern society. It aims at English follies, but its mark is universal, as the madness is. It is called a satire, but, after much diligent reading, we cannot discover the satire. A state of

society not at all superior to that of "Vanity Fair" is not unknown to our experience; and, unless truth-telling be satire; unless the most tragically real portraiture be satire; unless scalding tears of sorrow, and the bitter regret of a manly mind over the miserable spectacle of artificiality, wasted powers, misdirected energies, and lost opportunities, be satirical, we do not find satire in that sad story. The reader closes it with a grief beyond tears. It leaves a vague apprehension in the mind, as if we should suspect the air to be poisoned. It suggests the terrible thought of the enfeebling of moral power, and the deterioration of noble character, as a necessary consequence of contact with "society." Every man looks suddenly and sharply around him, and accosts himself and his neighbors, to ascertain if they are all parties to this corruption. Sentimental youths and maidens, upon velvet sofas, or in calf-bound libraries, resolve that it is an insult to human nature—are sure that their velvet and calf-bound friends are not like the dramatis personæ of "Vanity Fair," and that the drama is therefore hideous and unreal. They should remember, what they uniformly and universally forget, that we are not invited, upon the rising

of the curtain, to behold a cosmorama, or picture of the world, but a representation of that part of it called Vanity Fair. What its just limits are—how far its poisonous purlieus reach —how much of the world's air is tainted by it, is a question which every thoughtful man will ask himself, with a shudder, and look sadly around, to answer. If the sentimental objectors rally again to the charge, and declare that if we wish to improve the world its virtuous ambition must be piqued and stimulated by making the shining heights of "the ideal" more radiant; we reply, that none shall surpass us in honoring the men whose creations of beauty inspire and instruct mankind. But if they benefit the world, it is no less true that a vivid apprehension of the depths into which we are sunken or may sink nerves the soul's courage quite as much as the alluring mirage of the happy heights we may attain. "To hold the mirror up to Nature" is still the most potent method of shaming sin and strengthening virtue.

If "Vanity Fair" be a satire, what novel of society is not? Are "Vivian Grey," and "Pelham," and the long catalogue of books illustrating English, or the host of Balzacs, Sands,

Sues, and Dumas, that paint French society, less satires? Nay, if you should catch any dandy in Broadway, or in Pall-Mall, or upon the Boulevards, this very morning, and write a coldly true history of his life and actions, his doings and undoings, would it not be the most scathing and tremendous satire?—if by satire you mean the consuming melancholy of the conviction, that the life of that pendant to a moustache is an insult to the possible life of a man.

We have read of an hypocrisy so thorough, that it was surprised you should think it hypocritical: and we have bitterly thought of the saying, when hearing one mother say of another mother's child, that she had "made a good match," because the girl was betrothed to a stupid boy whose father was rich. The remark was the key of our social feeling.

Let us look at it a little, and, first of all, let the reader consider the criticism, and not the critic. We may like very well, in our individual capacity, to partake of the delicacies prepared by our hostess's *chef*, we may not be averse to *paté* and myriad *objets de goût*, and if you caught us in a corner at the next ball, putting away a fair share of *dinde aux truffes*, we know you would have at us in a tone of great

moral indignation, and wish to know why we sneaked into great houses, eating good suppers, and drinking choice wines, and then went away with an indigestion, to write dyspeptic disgusts at society.

We might reply that it is necessary to know something of a subject before writing about it, and that if a man wished to describe the habits of South Sea Islanders, it is useless to go to Greenland; we might also confess a partiality for *paté*, and a tenderness for *truffes*, and acknowledge that, considering our single absence would not put down extravagant, pompous parties, we were not strong enough to let the morsels drop into unappreciating mouths; or we might say, that if a man invited us to see his new house, it would not be ungracious nor insulting to his hospitality, to point out whatever weak parts we might detect in it, nor to declare our candid conviction, that it was built upon wrong principles and could not stand. He might believe us if we had been in the house, but he certainly would not, if we had never seen it. Nor would it be a very wise reply upon his part, that we might build a better if we did n't like that. We are not fond of David's pictures, but we certainly could never

paint half so well; nor of Pope's poetry, but posterity will never hear of our verses. Criticism is not construction, it is observation. If we could surpass in its own way every thing which displeased us, we should make short work of it, and instead of showing what fatal blemishes deform our present society, we should present a specimen of perfection, directly.

We went to the brilliant ball. There was too much of every thing. Too much light, and eating, and drinking, and dancing, and flirting, and dressing, and feigning, and smirking, and much too many people. Good taste insists first upon fitness. But why had Mrs. Potiphar given this ball? We inquired industriously, and learned it was because she did not give one last year. Is it then essential to do this thing biennially? inquired we with some trepidation. "Certainly," was the bland reply, "or society will forget you." Every body was unhappy at Mrs. Potiphar's, save a few girls and boys, who danced violently all the evening. Those who did not dance walked up and down the rooms as well as they could, squeezing by non-dancing ladies, causing them to swear in their hearts as the brusque broadcloth carried away the light outworks of gauze and gossamer.

The dowagers, ranged in solid phalanx, occupied all the chairs and sofas against the wall, and fanned themselves until supper-time, looking at each other's diamonds, and criticising the toilettes of the younger ladies, each narrowly watching her peculiar Polly Jane, that she did not betray too much interest in any man who was not of a certain fortune. It is the cold, vulgar truth, madam, nor are we in the slightest degree exaggerating. Elderly gentlemen, twisting single gloves in a very wretched manner, came up and bowed to the dowagers, and smirked, and said it was a pleasant party, and a handsome house, and then clutched their hands behind them, and walked miserably away, looking as affable as possible. And the dowagers made a little fun of the elderly gentlemen, among themselves, as they walked away.

Then came the younger non-dancing men—a class of the community who wear black cravats and waistcoats, and thrust their thumbs and forefingers in their waistcoat-pockets, and are called "talking men." Some of them are literary, and affect the philosopher; have, perhaps, written a book or two, and are a small species of lion to very young ladies. Some are

of the *blasé* kind,—men who affect the extremest elegance, and are reputed "so aristocratic," and who care for nothing in particular, but wish they had not been born gentlemen, in which case they might have escaped ennui. These gentlemen stand with hat in hand, and their coats and trowsers are unexceptionable. They are the "so gentlemanly" persons of whom one hears a great deal, but which seems to mean nothing but cleanliness. Vivian Grey and Pelham are the models of their ambition, and they succeed in being Pendennis. They enjoy the reputation of being "very clever," and "very talented fellows," and "smart chaps"; but they refrain from proving what is so generously conceded. They are often men of a certain cultivation. They have travelled, many of them—spending a year or two in Paris and a month or two in the rest of Europe. Consequently they endure society at home, with a smile, and a shrug, and a graceful superciliousness, which is very engaging. They are perfectly at home, and they rather despise Young America, which, in the next room, is diligently earning its invitation. They prefer to hover about the ladies who did not come out this season, but are a little used to the world,

with whom they are upon most friendly terms, and they criticise together, very freely, all the great events in the great world of fashion.

These elegant Pendennises we saw at Mrs. Potiphar's, but not without a sadness which can hardly be explained. They had been boys once, all of them, fresh and frank-hearted, and full of a noble ambition. They had read and pondered the histories of great men; how they resolved, and struggled, and achieved. In the pure portraiture of genius, they had loved and honored noble women, and each young heart was sworn to truth and the service of beauty. Those feelings were chivalric and fair. Those boyish instincts clung to whatever was lovely, and rejected the specious snare, however graceful and elegant. They sailed, new knights, upon that old and endless crusade against hypocrisy and the devil, and they were lost in the luxury of Corinth, nor longer seek the difficult shores beyond. A present smile was worth a future laurel. The ease of the moment was worth immortal tranquillity. They renounced the stern worship of the unknown God, and acknowledged the deities of Athens. But the seal of their shame is their own smile at their early dreams, and the high hopes of

their boyhood, their sneering infidelity of simplicity, their scepticism of motives and of men. Youths, whose younger years were fervid with the resolution to strike and win, to deserve, at least, a gentle remembrance, if not a dazzling fame, are content to eat, and drink, and sleep well; to go to the opera and all the balls; to be known as "gentlemanly," and "aristocratic," and "dangerous," and "elegant"; to cherish a luxurious and enervating indolence, and to "succeed," upon the cheap reputation of having been "fast" in Paris. The end of such men is evident enough from the beginning. They are snuffed out by a "great match," and become an appendage to a rich woman; or they dwindle off into old roués, men of the world in sad earnest, and not with elegant affectation, *blasé;* and as they began Arthur Pendennises, so they end the Major. But, believe it, that old fossil heart is wrung sometimes by a mortal pang, as it remembers those squandered opportunities and that lost life.

From these groups we passed into the dancing-room We have seen dancing in other countries, and dressing. We have certainly never seen gentlemen dance so easily, gracefully, and well, as the American. But the *style*

of dancing, in its whirl, its rush, its fury, is only equalled by that of the masked balls at the French opera, and the balls at the *Salle Valentino*, the *Jardin Mabille*, the *Chateau Rouge*, and other favorite resorts of Parisian Grisettes and Lorettes. We saw a few young men looking upon the dance very soberly, and, upon inquiry, learned that they were engaged to certain ladies of the corps-de-ballet. Nor did we wonder that the spectacle of a young woman whirling in a *décolleté* state, and in the embrace of a warm youth around a heated room, induced a little sobriety upon her lover's face, if not a sadness in his heart. Amusement, recreation, enjoyment! There are no more beautiful things. But this proceeding falls under another head. We watched the various toilets of these bounding belles. They were rich and tasteful. But a man at our elbow, of experience and shrewd observation, said, with a sneer, for which we called him to account: "I observe that American ladies are so rich in charms that they are not at all chary of them. It is certainly generous to us miserable black coats. But, do you know, it strikes me as a generosity of display that must necessarily leave the donor poorer in maidenly feeling."

We thought ourselves cynical, but this was intolerable; and in a very crisp manner we demanded an apology.

"Why," responded our friend with more of sadness than of satire in his tone, "why are you so exasperated? Look at this scene! Consider that this is, really, the life of these girls. This is what they 'come out' for. This is the end of their ambition. They think of it, dream of it, long for it. Is it amusement? Yes, to a few, possibly. But listen and gather, if you can, from their remarks (when they make any), that they have any thought beyond this, and going to church very rigidly on Sunday. The vigor of polking and church-going are proportioned; as is the one so is the other. My young friend, I am no ascetic, and do not suppose a man is damned becauses he dances. But life is not a ball (more 's the pity, truly, for these butterflies), nor is its sole duty and delight, dancing. When I consider this spectacle—when I remember what a noble and beautiful woman is, what a manly man—when I reel, dazzled by this glare, drunken by these perfumes, confused by this alluring music, and reflect upon the enormous sums wasted in a pompous profusion that delights no one—when

I look around upon all this rampant vulgarity in tinsel and Brussels lace, and think how fortunes go, how men struggle and lose the bloom of their honesty, how women hide in a smiling pretence, and eye with caustic glances their neighbor's newer house, diamonds, or porcelain, and observe their daughters, such as these—why, I tremble, and tremble, and this scene to-night, every 'crack' ball this winter, will be, not the pleasant society of men and women, but—even in this young country—an orgie such as rotting Corinth saw, a frenzied festival of Rome in its decadence."

There was a sober truth in this bitterness, and we turned away to escape the sombre thought of the moment. Addressing one of the panting houris who stood melting in a window, we spoke (and confess how absurdly) of the Düsseldorf Gallery. It was merely to avoid saying how warm the room was, and how pleasant the party was, facts upon which we had already enlarged. "Yes, they are pretty pictures; but la! how long it must have taken Mr. Düsseldorf to paint them all," was the reply.

By the Farnesian Hercules! no Roman sylph in her city's decline would ever have called the

sun-god, Mr. Apollo. We hope that houri melted entirely away in the window; but we certainly did not stay to see.

Passing out toward the supper-room we encountered two young men. "What, Hal," said one, "*you* at Mrs. Potiphar's?" It seems that Hal was a sprig of one of the "old families." "Well, Joe," said Hal, a little confused, "it *is* a little strange. The fact is I did n't mean to be here, but I concluded to compromise by coming, *and not being introduced to the host*." Hal could come, eat Potiphar's supper, drink his wines, spoil his carpets, laugh at his fashionable struggles, and affect the puppyism of a foreign lord, because he disgraced the name of a man who had done some service somewhere, while Potiphar was only an honest man who made a fortune.

The supper-room was a pleasant place. The table was covered with a chaos of supper. Every thing sweet and rare, and hot and cold, solid and liquid, was there. It was the very apotheosis of gilt gingerbread. There was a universal rush and struggle. The charge of the guards at Waterloo was nothing to it. Jellies, custard, oyster-soup, ice-cream, wine and water, gushed in profuse cascades over trans-

parent precipices of *tulle*, muslin, gauze, silk, and satin. Clumsy boys tumbled against costly dresses and smeared them with preserves; when clean plates failed, the contents of plates already used were quietly "chucked" under the table—heel-taps of champagne were poured into the oyster tureens or overflowed upon plates to clear the glasses—wine of all kinds flowed in torrents, particularly down the throats of very young men, who evinced their manhood by becoming noisy, troublesome, and disgusting, and were finally either led, sick, into the hat-room, or carried out of the way, drunk. The supper over, the young people, attended by their matrons, descended to the dancing-room for the "German." This is a dance commencing usually at midnight or a little after, and continuing indefinitely toward daybreak. The young people were attended by their matrons, who were there to supervise the morals and manners of their charges. To secure the performance of this duty, the young people took good care to sit where the matrons could not see them, nor did they, by any chance, look toward the quarter in which the matrons sat. In that quarter, through all the varying mazes of the prolonged dance, to two o'clock, to three,

to four, sat the bediamonded dowagers, the mothers, the matrons—against nature, against common-sense. They babbled with each other, they drowsed, they dozed. Their fans fell listless into their laps. In the adjoining room, out of the waking sight, even, of the then sleeping mammas, the daughters whirled in the close embrace of partners who had brought down bottles of champagne from the supper-room, and put them by the side of their chairs for occasional refreshment during the dance. The dizzy hours staggered by—"Azalia, you *must* come now," had been already said a dozen times, but only as by the scribes. Finally it was declared with authority. Azalia went—Amelia—Arabella. The rest followed. There was prolonged cloaking, there were lingering farewells. A few papas were in the supper-room, sitting among the *débris* of the game. A few young non-dancing husbands sat beneath gas unnaturally bright, reading whatever chance book was at hand, and thinking of the young child at home waiting for mamma who was dancing the "German" below. A few exhausted matrons sat in the robing-room, tired, sad, wishing Jane would come up; assailed at intervals by a vague suspicion that it was not

quite worth while; wondering how it was they used to have such good times at balls; yawning, and looking at their watches; while the regular beat of the music below, with sardonic sadness, continued. At last Jane came up, had had the most glorious time, and went down with mamma to the carriage, and so drove home. Even the last Jane went—the last noisy youth was expelled, and Mr. and Mrs. Potiphar, having duly performed their biennial social duty, dismissed the music, ordered the servants to count the spoons, and an hour or two after daylight went to bed. Enviable Mr. and Mrs. Potiphar!

We are now prepared for the great moral indignation of the friend who saw us eating our *dinde aux truffes* in that remarkable supper-room. We are waiting to hear him say in the most moderate and "gentlemanly" manner, that it is all very well to select flaws and present them as specimens, and to learn from him, possibly with indignant publicity, that the present condition of parties is not what we have intimated. Or, in his quiet and pointed way, he may smile at our fiery assault upon edged flounces and nugat pyramids, and the kingdom of Lilliput in general.

Yet, after all, and despite the youths who are led out, and carried home, or who stumble through the "German," this is a sober matter. My friend told us we should see the "best society." But he is a prodigious wag. Who make this country? From whom is its character of unparalleled enterprise, heroism, and success derived? Who have given it its place in the respect and the fear of the world? Who, annually, recruit its energies, confirm its progress, and secure its triumph? Who are its characteristic children, the pith, the sinew, the bone, of its prosperity? Who found, and direct, and continue its manifold institutions of mercy and education? Who are, essentially, Americans? Indignant friend, these classes, whoever they may be, are the "best society," because they alone are the representatives of its character and cultivation. They are the "best society" of New York, of Boston, of Baltimore, of St. Louis, of New Orleans, whether they live upon six hundred or sixty thousand dollars a year—whether they inhabit princely houses in fashionable streets (which they often do), or not—whether their sons have graduated at Celarius's and the *Jardin Mabille*, or have never been out of their father's shops

—whether they have "air" and "style," and are "so gentlemanly" and "so aristocratic," or not. Your shoemaker, your lawyer, your butcher, your clergyman—if they are simple and steady, and, whether rich or poor, are unseduced by the sirens of extravagance and ruinous display, help make up the "best society." For that mystic communion is not composed of the rich, but of the worthy; and is "best" by its virtues, and not by its vices. When Johnson, Burke, Goldsmith, Garrick, Reynolds, and their friends, met at supper in Goldsmith's rooms, where was the "best society" in England? When George the Fourth outraged humanity and decency in his treatment of Queen Caroline, who was the first scoundrel in Europe?

Pause yet a moment, indignant friend. Whose habits and principles would ruin this country as rapidly as it has been made? Who are enamored of a puerile imitation of foreign splendors? Who strenuously endeavor to graft the questionable points of Parisian society upon our own? Who pass a few years in Europe and return sceptical of republicanism and human improvement, longing and sighing for more sharply emphasized social distinctions?

Who squander, with profuse recklessness, the hard-earned fortunes of their sires? Who diligently devote their time to nothing, foolishly and wrongly supposing that a young English nobleman has nothing to do? Who, in fine, evince by their collective conduct, that they regard their Americanism as a misfortune, and are so the most deadly enemies of their country? None but what our wag facetiously termed "the best society."

If the reader doubts, let him consider its practical results in any great emporiums of "best society." Marriage is there regarded as a luxury, too expensive for any but the sons of rich men, or fortunate young men. We once heard an eminent divine assert, and only half in sport, that the rate of living was advancing so incredibly, that weddings in his experience were perceptibly diminishing. The reasons might have been many and various. But we all acknowledge the fact. On the other hand and about the same time, a lovely damsel (ah! Clorinda!) whose father was not wealthy, who had no prospective means of support, who could do nothing but polka to perfection, who literally knew almost nothing, and who constantly shocked every fairly intelligent person by the

glaring ignorance betrayed in her remarks, informed a friend at one of the Saratoga balls, whither he had made haste to meet "the best society," that there were "not more than three good matches in society." *La Dame aux Camélias*, Marie Duplessis, was to our fancy a much more feminine, and admirable, and moral, and human person, than the adored Clorinda. And yet what she said was the legitimate result of the state of our fashionable society. It worships wealth, and the pomp which wealth can purchase, more than virtue, genius, or beauty. We may be told that it has always been so in every country, and that the fine society of all lands is as profuse and flashy as our own. We deny it, flatly. Neither English, nor French, nor Italian, nor German society, is so unspeakably barren as that which is technically called "society" here. In London, and Paris, and Vienna, and Rome, all the really eminent men and women help make up the mass of society. A party is not a mere ball, but it is a congress of the wit, beauty, and fame of the capital. It is worth while to dress, if you shall meet Macaulay, or Hallam, or Guizot, or Thiers, or Landseer, or Delaroche—Mrs. Norton, the Misses Berry, Madame Recamier, and all the

brilliant women and famous foreigners. But why should we desert the pleasant pages of those men, and the recorded gossip of those women, to be squeezed flat against a wall, while young Doughface pours oyster-gravy down our shirt-front, and Caroline Pettitoes wonders at "Mr. Düsseldorf's" industry?

If intelligent people decline to go, you justly remark, it is their own fault. Yes, but if they stay away, it is very certainly their great gain. The elderly people are always neglected with us, and nothing surprises intelligent strangers more than the tyrannical supremacy of Young America. But we are not surprised at this neglect. How can we be, if we have our eyes open? When Caroline Pettitoes retreats from the floor to the sofa, and instead of a "polker" figures at parties as a matron, do you suppose that "tough old Joes" like ourselves are going to desert the young Caroline upon the floor, for Madame Pettitoes upon the sofa? If the pretty young Caroline, with youth, health, freshness, a fine, budding form, and wreathed in a semi-transparent haze of flounced and flowered gauze, is so vapid that we prefer to accost her with our eyes alone, and not with our tongues, is the same Caroline married into a Madame

Pettitoes, and fanning herself upon a sofa—no longer particularly fresh, nor young, nor pretty, and no longer budding, but very fully blown—likely to be fascinating in conversation? We cannot wonder that the whole connection of Pettitoes, when advanced to the matron state, is entirely neglected. Proper homage to age we can all pay at home, to our parents and grandparents. Proper respect for some persons is best preserved by avoiding their neighborhood.

And what, think you, is the influence of this extravagant expense and senseless show upon these same young men and women? We can easily discover. It saps their noble ambition, assails their health, lowers their estimate of men, and their reverence for women, cherishes an eager and aimless rivalry, weakens true feeling, wipes away the bloom of true modesty, and induces an ennui, a satiety, and a kind of dilettante misanthropy, which is only the more monstrous because it is undoubtedly real. You shall hear young men of intelligence and cultivation, to whom the unprecedented circumstances of this country offer opportunities of a great and beneficent career, complaining that they were born within this blighted circle; regretting that

they were not bakers and tallow-chandlers, and under no obligation to keep up appearances; deliberately surrendering all the golden possibilities of that future which this country, beyond all others, holds before them; sighing that they are not rich enough to marry the girls they love, and bitterly upbraiding fortune that they are not millionaires; suffering the vigor of their years to exhale in idle wishes and pointless regrets; disgracing their manhood by lying in wait behind their "so gentlemanly" and "aristocratic" manners, until they can pounce upon a "fortune" and ensnare an heiress into matrimony: and so, having dragged their gifts—their horses of the sun—into a service which shames out of them all their native pride and power, they sink in the mire; and their peers and emulators exclaim that they have "made a good thing of it."

Are these the processes by which a noble race is made and perpetuated? At Mrs. Potiphar's we heard several Pendennises longing for a similar luxury, and announcing their firm purpose never to have wives nor houses until they could have them as splendid as jewelled Mrs. Potiphar, and her palace, thirty feet front. Where were their heads, and their

hearts, and their arms? How looks this craven despondency, before the stern virtues of the ages we call dark? When a man is so voluntarily imbecile as to regret he is not rich, if that is what he wants, before he has struck a blow for wealth; or so dastardly as to renounce the prospect of love, because sitting sighing, in velvet dressing-gown and slippers, he does not see his way clear to ten thousand a year: when young women coiffed *à merveille*, of unexceptionable "style," who, with or without a prospective penny, secretly look down upon honest women who struggle for a livelihood, like noble and Christian beings, and, as such, are rewarded; in whose society a man must forget that he has ever read, thought, or felt; who destroy in the mind the fair ideal of women, which the genius of art, and poetry, and love, their inspirer has created; then, it seems to us, it is high time that the subject should be regarded, not as a matter of breaking butterflies upon the wheel, but as a sad and sober question, in whose solution, all fathers and mothers, and the state itself, are interested. When keen observers, and men of the world, from Europe, are amazed and appalled at the giddy whirl and frenzied rush of our society—a

society singular in history for the exaggerated prominence it assigns to wealth, irrespective of the talents that amassed it, they and their possessor being usually hustled out of sight—is it not quite time to ponder a little upon the Court of Louis XIV., and the "merrie days" of King Charles II.? Is it not clear that, if what our good wag, with caustic irony, called "best society," were really such, every thoughtful man would read upon Mrs. Potiphar's softly-tinted walls the terrible "mene, mene" of an imminent destruction.

Venice in her purple prime of luxury, when the famous law was passed making all gondolas black, that the nobles should not squander fortunes upon them, was not more luxurious than New York to-day. Our hotels have a superficial splendor, derived from a profusion of gilt and paint, wood and damask. Yet, in not one of them can the traveller be so quietly comfortable as in an English inn, and nowhere in New York can a stranger procure a dinner, at once so neat and elegant, and economical, as at scores of cafés in Paris. The fever of display has consumed comfort. A gondola plated with gold was no easier than a black wooden one. We could well spare a little gilt upon the walls, for

more cleanliness upon the public table; nor is it worth while to cover the walls with mirrors to reflect a want of comfort. One prefers a wooden bench to a greasy velvet cushion, and a sanded floor to a soiled and threadbare carpet. An insipid uniformity is the Procrustes-bed upon which "society" is stretched. Every new house is the counterpart of every other, with the exception of more gilt, if the owner can afford it. The interior arrangement, instead of being characteristic, instead of revealing something of the tastes and feelings of the owner, is rigorously conformed to every other interior. The same hollow and tame complaisance rules in the intercourse of society. Who dares say precisely what he thinks upon a great topic? What youth ventures to say sharp things, of slavery, for instance, at a polite dinner-table? What girl dares wear curls, when Martelle prescribes puffs or bandeaux? What specimen of Young America dares have his trousers loose or wear straps to them? We want individuality, heroism, and, if necessary, an uncompromising persistence in difference.

This is the present state of parties. They are wildly extravagant, full of senseless display; they are avoided by the pleasant and intelli-

gent, and swarm with reckless regiments of "Brown's men." The ends of the earth contribute their choicest products to the supper, and there is every thing that wealth can purchase, and all the specious splendor that thirty feet front can afford. They are hot, and crowded, and glaring. There is a little weak scandal, venomous, not witty, and a stream of weary platitude, mortifying to every sensible person. Will any of our Pendennis friends intermit their indignation for a moment, and consider how many good things they have said or heard during the season? If Mr. Potiphar's eyes should chance to fall here, will he reckon the amount of satisfaction and enjoyment he derived from Mrs. Potiphar's ball, and will that lady candidly confess what she gained from it beside weariness and disgust? What eloquent sermons we remember to have heard in which the sins and sinners of Babylon, Jericho, and Gomorrah were scathed with holy indignation. The cloth is very hard upon Cain, and completely routs the erring kings of Judah. The Spanish Inquisition, too, gets frightful knocks, and there is much eloquent exhortation to preach the gospel in the interior of Siam. Let it be preached there and God speed the Word.

But also let us have a text or two in Broadway and the Avenue.

The best sermon ever preached upon society, within our knowledge, is "Vanity Fair." Is the spirit of that story less true of New York than of London? Probably we never see Amelia at our parties, nor Lieutenant George Osborne, nor good gawky Dobbin, nor Mrs. Rebecca Sharp Crawley, nor old Steyne. We are very much pained, of course, that any author should take such dreary views of human nature. We, for our parts, all go to Mrs. Potiphar's to refresh our faith in men and women. Generosity, amiability, a catholic charity, simplicity, taste, sense, high cultivation, and intelligence, distinguish our parties. The statesman seeks their stimulating influence; the literary man, after the day's labor, desires the repose of their elegant conversation; the professional man and the merchant hurry up from down town to shuffle off the coil of heavy duty, and forget the drudgery of life in the agreeable picture of its amenities and graces presented by Mrs. Potiphar's ball. Is this account of the matter, or "Vanity Fair," the satire? What are the prospects of any society of which that tale is the true history?

There is a picture in the Luxembourg gallery at Paris, "The Decadence of the Romans," which made the fame and fortune of Couture, the painter. It represents an orgie in the court of a temple, during the last days of Rome. A swarm of revellers occupy the middle of the picture, wreathed in elaborate intricacy of luxurious posture, men and women intermingled, their faces, in which the old Roman fire scarcely flickers, brutalized with excess of every kind; their heads of dishevelled hair bound with coronals of leaves, while, from goblets of an antique grace, they drain the fiery torrent which is destroying them. Around the bacchanalian feast stand, lofty upon pedestals, the statues of old Rome, looking with marble calmness and the severity of a rebuke beyond words, upon the revellers. A youth of boyish grace, with a wreath woven in his tangled hair, and with red and drowsy eyes, sits listless upon one pedestal, while upon another stands a boy insane with drunkenness, and proffering a dripping goblet to the marble mouth of the statue. In the corner of the picture, as if just quitting the court—Rome finally departing—is a group of Romans with care-worn brows, and hands raised to their

faces in melancholy meditation. In the foreground of the picture, which is painted with all the sumptuous splendor of the Venetian art, is a stately vase, around which hangs a festoon of gorgeous flowers, its end dragging upon the pavement. In the background, between the columns, smiles the blue sky of Italy—the only thing Italian not deteriorated by time. The careful student of this picture, if he have been long in Paris, is some day startled by detecting, especially in the faces of the women represented, a surprising likeness to the women of Paris, and perceives, with a thrill of dismay, that the models for this picture of decadent human nature are furnished by the very city in which he lives.

A MEDITATION

BY PAUL POTIPHAR, ESQ.

WELL, my new house is finished—and so am I. I hope Mrs. Potiphar is satisfied. Every body agrees that it is "palatial." The daily papers have had columns of description, and I am, evidently, according to their authority, "munificent," "tasteful," "enterprising," and "patriotic."

Amen! but what business have I with palatial residences? What more can I possibly want than a spacious, comfortable house? Do *I* want buhl *escritoires?* Do I want *or molu* things? Do I know any thing about pictures and statues? In the name of heaven, do I want rose-pink bed-curtains to give my grizzly old phiz a delicate "auroral hue," as Cream Cheese says of Mrs. P.'s complexion? Because I have made fifty thousand this last year in Timbuctoo bonds, must I convert it all into a house, so large that it will not hold me comfortably—so splendid that I might as well live

in a porcelain vase, for the trouble of taking care of it—so prodigiously "palatial" that I have to skulk into my private room, put on my slippers, close the door, shut myself up with myself, and wonder why I married Mrs. Potiphar?

This house is her doing. Before I married her, I would have worn yellow silk breeches on 'Change if she had commanded me—for love. Now I would build her two houses twice as large as this, if she required it—for peace. It 's all over. When I came home from China I was the desirable Mr. Potiphar, and every evening was a field-day for me, in which I reviewed all the matrimonial forces. It is astonishing, now I come to think of it, how skillfully Brigadier-General Mrs. Pettitoes deployed those daughters of hers; how vigorously Mrs. Tabby led on her forlorn hope; and how unweariedly, Murat-like, Mrs. De Famille charged at the head of her cavalry. They deserve to be made marshals of France, all of them. And I am sure that, if women ought ever to receive honorary testimonials, it is for having "married a daughter well."

That 's a pretty phrase! The mammas marry, the misses are married.

And yet, I don't see why I say so. I fear I am getting sour. For, certainly, Polly's mother did n't marry Polly to me. I fell in love with her; the rest followed. Old Gnu says that it 's true Polly's mother did n't marry her, but she did marry herself, to me.

"Do you really think, Paul Potiphar," said he, a few months ago, when I was troubled about Polly's getting a livery, "that your wife was in love with you, a dry old chip from China? Don't you hear her say, whenever any of her friends are engaged, that they 'have done very well!' and made a 'capital match!' and have you any doubt of her meaning? Don't you know that this is the only country in which the word 'money' must never be named in the young female ear; and in whose best society—not universally nor without exception, of course not; Paul, don't be a fool—money makes marriages? When you were engaged, 'the world' said that it was a 'capital thing' for Polly. Did that mean that you were a good, generous, intelligent, friendly, and patient man, who would be the companion for life she ought to have? You know, as well as I do, and as all the people who said it know, that it meant you were worth a few hundred thousands; that you

could build a splendid house, keep horses and chariots, and live in style. You and I are sensible men, Paul, and we take the world as we find it; and know that if a man wants a good dinner he must pay for it. We don't quarrel with this state of things. How can it be helped? But we need not virtuously pretend it's something else. When my wife, being then a gay girl, first smiled at me, and looked at me, and smelt at the flowers I sent her in an unutterable manner, and proved to me that she didn't love me by the efforts she made to show that she did, why, I was foolishly smitten with her, and married her. I knew that she did not marry me, but sundry shares in the Patagonia and Nova Zembla Consolidation, and a few hundred house-lots upon the island. What then? I wanted her, she was willing to take me—being sensible enough to know that the stock and the lots had an encumbrance. *Voilà tout*, as young Boosey says. Your wife wants you to build a house. You'd better build it. It's the easiest way. Make up your mind to Mrs. Potiphar, my dear Paul, and thank heaven you've no daughters to be married off by that estimable woman."

Why does a man build a house? To live in,

I suppose—to have a home. But is a fine house a home? I mean, is a "palatial residence," with Mrs. Potiphar at the head of it, the "home" of which we all dream more or less, and for which we ardently long as we grow older? A house, I take it, is a retreat to which a man hurries from business, and in which he is compensated by the tenderness and thoughtful regard of a woman, and the play of his children, for the rough rubs with men. I know it is a silly view of the case, but I'm getting old and can't help it. Mrs. Potiphar is perfectly right when she says:

"You men are intolerable. After attending to your own affairs all day, and being free from the fuss of housekeeping, you expect to come home and shuffle into your slippers, and snooze over the evening paper—if it were possible to snooze over the exciting and respectable evening journal you take—while we are to sew, and talk with you if you are talkative, and darn the stockings, and make tea. You come home tired, and, likely enough, surly, and gloom about like a thunder-cloud if dinner is n't ready for you the instant you are ready for it, and then sit mum and eat it; and snap at the children, and show yourselves the selfish ugly

things you are. Am *I* to have no fun, never go to the opera, never go to a ball, never have a party at home? Men are tyrants, Mr. Potiphar. They are ogres who entice us poor girls into their castles, and then eat up our happiness, and scold us while they eat."

Well, I suppose it is so. I suppose I am an ogre and enticed Polly into my castle. But she did n't find it large enough, and teased me to build another. I suppose she does sit with me in the evening, and sew, and make tea, and wait upon me. I suppose she does, but I 've not a clear idea of it. I know it is unkind of me, when I have been hard at work all day, trying to make and secure the money that gives her and her family every thing they want, and which wearies me body and soul, to expect her to let me stay at home, and be quiet. I know I ought to dress and go into Gnu's house, and smirk at his wife, and stand up in a black suit before him attired in the same way, and talk about the same stocks that we discussed down town in the morning in colored trowsers. That 's a social duty, I suppose. And I ought to see various slight young gentlemen whirl my wife around the room, and hear them tell her when they stop, that it 's very warm. That 's

another social duty, I suppose. And I must smile when the same young gentlemen put their elbows into my stomach, and hop on my feet in order to extend the circle of the dance. I 'm sure Mrs. P. is right. She does very right to ask: "Have we no social duties, I should like to know?"

And when we have performed these social duties in Gnu's house, how mean it is, how "it looks," not to build a larger house for him and Mrs. Gnu to come and perform their social duties in. I give it up. There 's no doubt of it.

One day Polly said to me:

"Mr. Potiphar, we're getting down town."

"What do you mean, my dear?"

"Why, everybody is building above us, and there are actually shops in the next street. Singe, the pastry-cook, has hired Mrs. Crœsus's old house."

"I know it. Old Crœsus told me so some time ago; and he said how sorry he was to go. 'Why, Potiphar,' said he, 'I really hoped when I built there, that I should stay, and not go out of the house, finally, until I went into no other. I have lived there long enough to love the place, and have some associations with it; and my family have grown up in it, and love the

old house, too. It was our *home*. When any of us said 'home,' we meant not the family only, but the house in which the family lived, where the children were all born, and where two have died, and my old mother, too. I 'm in a new house now, and have lost my reckoning entirely. I don't know the house; I 've no associations with it. The house is new, the furniture is new, and my feelings are new. It 's a farce for me to begin again, in this way. But my wife says it 's all right, that everybody does it and wants to know how it can be helped; and, as I don't want to argue the matter, I look amen.' That 's the way Mr. Crœsus submits to his new house, Mrs. Potiphar."

She doesn't understand it. Poor child! how should she? She, and Mrs. Crœsus, and Mrs. Gnu, and even Mrs. Settum Downe, are all as nomadic as Bedoueen Arabs. The Rev. Cream Cheese says, that he sees in this constant migration from one house to another, a striking resemblance to the "tents of a night," spoken of in Scripture. He imparts this religious consolation to me when I grumble. He says, that it prevents a too-closely clinging affection to temporary abodes. One day, at dinner, that audacious wag, Boosey, asked him if the "many

manthuns" mentioned in the Bible, were not as true of mortal as of immortal life. Mrs. Potiphar grew purple, and Mr. Cheese looked at Boosey in the most serious manner over the top of his champagne-glass. I am glad to say that Polly has properly rebuked Gauche Boosey for his irreligion, by not asking him to her Saturday evening *matinées dansantes*.

There was no escape from the house, however. It must be built. It was not only Mrs. Potiphar that persisted, but the spirit of the age and of the country. One can't live among shops. When Pearl street comes to Park Place, Park Place must run for its life up to Thirtieth street. I know it can't be helped, but I protested, and I will protest. If I 've got to go, I 'll have my grumble. My wife says:

"I 'm ashamed of you, Potiphar. Do you pretend to be an American, and not give way willingly to the march of improvement? You had better talk with Mr. Cream Cheese upon the 'genius of the country.' You are really unpatriotic; you show nothing of the enterprising spirit of your time." "Yes," I answer. "That 's pretty from you; you are patriotic, are n't you, with your liveries and illimitable expenses, and your low bows to money, and

your immense intimacy with all lords and ladies that honor the city by visiting it. You are prodigiously patriotic with your inane imitations of a splendor impossible to you in the nature of things. You are the ideal American woman, are n't you, Mrs. Potiphar?"

Then I run, for I 'm afraid of myself as much as of her. I am sick of this universal plea of patriotism. It is used to excuse all the follies that outrage it. I am not patriotic if I don't do this and that, which, if done, is a ludicrous caricature of something foreign. I am not up to the time if I persist in having my own comfort in my own way. I try to resist the irresistible march of improvement if I decline to build a great house, which, when it is built, is a puny copy of a bad model. I am very unpatriotic if I am not trying to outspend foreign noblemen, and if I don't affect, without education, or taste, or habit, what is only beautiful when it is the result of the three.

However, this is merely my grumble. I knew, the first morning Mrs. Potiphar spoke of a new house, that I must build it. What she said was perfectly true; we were getting down town, there was no doubt of the growing inconvenience of our situation. It was becoming a

dusty, noisy region. The congregation of the Rev. Far Niente had sold their church and moved up town. Now does n't it really seem as if we were a cross between the Arabs who dwell in tents and those who live in cities, for we are migratory in the city? A directory is a more imperative annual necessity here than in any other civilized region. My wife says it is a constant pleasure to her to go round and see the new houses and the new furniture of her new friends every year. I saw that I must submit. But I determined to make little occasional stands against it. So one day I said:

"Polly, do you know that the wives of all the noblemen who will be your very dear and intimate friends and models when you go abroad always live in the same houses in London, and Paris, and Rome, and Vienna? Do you know that Northumberland House is so called because it is the hereditary town-mansion of the Duke, and that the son and daughter-in-law of Lord Londonderry will live after him in the house where his father and mother lived before him? Did that ever occur to you, my dear?"

"Mr. Potiphar," she replied, "do you mean to go by the example of foreign noblemen? I thought you always laughed at me for what you call 'aping.'"

"So I do, and so I will continue to do, Mrs. Potiphar; only I thought that, perhaps, you would like to know the fact, because it might make you more lenient to me when I regretted leaving our old house here. It has an aristocratic precedent."

Poor, dear little Mrs. P.! It did n't take as I meant it should, and I said no more. Yet it does seem to me a pity that we lose all the interest and advantage of a homestead. The house and the furniture become endeared by long residence, and by their mute share in all the chances of our life. The chair in which some dear old friend so often sat—father and mother, perhaps—and in which they shall sit no more; the old fashioned table, with the cuts and scratches that generations of children have made upon it; the old book-cases; the heavy side-board; the glass, from which such bumpers sparkled for those who are hopelessly scattered now, or forever gone; the doors they opened; the walls that echoed their long-hushed laughter—are we wise when we part with them all, or, when compelled to do so, to leave them eagerly?

I remember my brother James used to say:

"What is our envy for our country friends,

but that their homes are permanent and characteristic? Their children's children may play in the same garden. Each annual festival may summon them to the old hearth. In the meeting-house they sit in the wooden pews where long ago they sat and dreamed of Jerusalem; and now as they sit there, that long ago is fairer than the holy city. Through the open window they see the grass waving softly in the summer air, over old graves dearer to them than many new houses. By a thousand tangible and visible associations they are still, with a peculiar sense of actuality, near to all they love."

Polly would call it a sentimental whim—if she could take Mrs. Crœsus's advice before she spoke of it—but what then? When I was fifteen, I fell desperately in love with Lucy Lamb. "Pooh, pooh," said my father, "you are romantic, it 's all a whim of yours."

And he succeeded in breaking it up. I went to China, and Lucy married old Firkin, and lived in a splendid house, and now lies in a splendid tomb of Carrara marble, exquisitely sculptured.

When I was forty, I came home from China, and the old gentleman said: "I want you to marry Arabella Bobbs, the heiress. It will be a good match."

I said to him.

"Pooh, pooh, my dear father, you are mercenary; it 's all a whim of yours."

"My dear son, I know it," said he, "the whole thing is whim. You can live on a hundred dollars a year, if you choose. But you have the whim of a good dinner, of a statue, of a book. Why not? Only be careful in following your whims, that they really come to something. Have as many whims as you please, but don't follow them all."

"Certainly not," said I; and fell in love with the present Mrs. Potiphar, and married her, offhand. So, if she calls this genuine influence of association a mere whim—let it go at that. She is a whim, too. My mistake simply was in not following out the romantic whim, and marrying Lucy Lamb. At least it seems to me so, this morning. In fact, sitting in my very new "palatial residence," the whole business of life seems to me rather whimsical.

For here I am, come into port at last. No longer young—but worth a good fortune—master of a great house—respected down town—husband of Mrs. Potiphar—and father of Master Frederic ditto. Per contra; I shall never be in love again—in getting my fortune I have

lost my real life—my house is dreary—Mrs. Potiphar is not Lucy Lamb, and Master Frederic—is a good boy.

The game is all up for me, and yet I trust I have good feeling enough left to sympathize with those who are still playing. I see girls as lovely and dear as any of which poets have sung—as fresh as dew-drops, and beautiful as morning. I watch their glances, and understand them better than they know—for they do not dream that "old Potiphar" does anything more than pay Mrs. P.'s bills. I see the youths nervous about neckcloths, and anxious that their hair shall be parted straight behind. I see them all wear the same tie, the same trousers, the same boots. I hear them all say the same thing, and dance with the same partners in the same way. I see them go to Europe and return—I hear them talk slang to show that they have exhausted human life in foreign parts, and observe them demean themselves according to their idea of the English nobleman. I watch them go in strongly for being "manly," and "smashing the spoonies"—asserting intimacies with certain uncertain women in Paris, and proving it by their treatment of ladies at home. I see them fuddle

themselves on fine wines and talk like cooks, play heavily and lose, and win, and pay, and drink, and maintain a conservative position in politics, denouncing "Uncle Tom's Cabin," as a false and fanatical tract; and declaring that our peculiar institutions are our own affair, and that John Bull had better keep his eyes at home to look into his coal mines. I see this vigorous fermentation subside, and much clearer character deposited—and, also, much life and talent muddled for ever.

It is whimsical, because this absurd spectacle is presented by manikins who are made of the same clay as Plutarch's heroes—because, deliberately, they prefer cabbages to roses. I am not at all angry with them. On the contrary, when they dance well I look on with pleasure. Man ought to dance, but he ought to do something else, too. All genial gentlemen in all ages have danced. Who quarrels with dancing? Ask Mrs. Potiphar if I ever objected to do it. But then, people must dance at their own risk. If Lucy Lamb, by dancing with young Boosey when he is tipsy, shows that she has no self-respect, how can I, cooly talking with Mrs. Lamb in the corner, and gravely looking on, respect the young lady? Lucy tells me that if

she dances with James she must dance with John. I cannot deny it, for I am not sufficiently familiar with the regulations of the mystery. Only this; if dancing with sober James makes it necessary to dance with tipsy John—it seems to me, upon a hasty glance at the subject, that a self-respecting Lucy would refrain from the dance with James. Why it should be so I cannot understand. Why Lucy must dance with every man who asks her, whether he is in his senses, or knows how to dance, or is agreeable to her or not, is a profound mystery to Paul Potiphar. Here is a case of woman's wrongs, decidedly. We men cull the choicest partners, make the severest selections, and the innocent Lucys gracefully submit. Lucy loves James, and a waltz with him (as P. P. knows very well from experience) is "a little heaven below" to both. Now, dearest Lucy, why must you pay the awful penance of immediately waltzing with John, against whom your womanly instinct rebels? And yet the laws of social life are so stern, that Lucy must make the terrible decision, whether it is better to waltz with James or worse to waltz with John! "Whether," to put it strongly with Father Jerome, "heaven is pleasanter than hell is painful."

I say that I watch these graceful gamesters without bitter feeling. Sometimes it is sad to see James woo Lucy, win her, marry her, and then both discover that they have made a mistake. I do n't see how they could have helped it; and when the world, that loves them both so tenderly, holds up its pure hands of horror, why, Paul Potiphar goes quietly home to Mrs. P., who is dressing for Lucy's ball, and says nothing. He prefers to retire into his private room, and his slippers, and read the last number of *Bleak House*, or a chapter in *Vanity Fair*. If Mrs. Potiphar catches him at the latter, she is sure to say:

"There it is again; always reading those exaggerated sketches of society. Odious man that he is. I am sure he never knew a truly womanly woman."

"Polly, when he comes back in September, I 'll introduce him to you," is the only answer I have time to make, for it is already half past ten, and Mrs. P. must be off to the ball.

I know that our set is not the world, nor the country, nor the city. I know that the amiable youths who are in league to crush spooneyism are not many, and well I know, that in our set (I mean Mrs. P.'s) there are hearts as noble and

characters as lofty as in any time and in any land. And yet, as the father of a family (viz: Frederic, our son), I am constrained to believe that our social tendency is to the wildest extravagance. Here, for instance, is my house. It cost me eighty-five thousand dollars. It is superbly furnished. Mrs. P. and I don't know much about such things. She was only stringent for buhl, and the last Parisian models, so we delivered our house into the hands of certain eminent upholsterers to be furnished, as we send Frederic, to the tailor's to be clothed. To be sure, I asked what proof we had that the upholsterer was possessed of taste. But Mrs. P. silenced me, by saying that it was his business to have taste, and that a man who sold furniture, naturally knew what was handsome and proper for my house.

The furnishing was certainly performed with great splendor and expense. My drawing-rooms strongly resembled the warehouse of an ideal cabinet-maker. Every whim of table—every caprice of chair and sofa, is satisfied in those rooms. There are curtains like rainbows, and carpets, as if the curtains had dripped all over the floor. There are heavy cabinets of carved walnut, such as belong in the heavy wainscotted

rooms of old palaces, set against my last French pattern of wall-paper. There are lofty chairs, like the thrones of archbishops in Gothic cathedrals, standing by the side of the elaborately gilded frames of mirrors. Marble statues of Venus and Apollo support my mantels, upon which *or molu* Louis Quatorze clocks ring the hours. In all possible places there are statues, statuettes, vases, plates, teacups, and liquor-cases. The wood-work, when white, is elaborated in Moresco carving—when oak and walnut, it is heavily moulded. The contrasts are pretty, but rather sudden. In truth, my house is a huge curiosity-shop of valuable articles—clustered without taste, or feeling, or reason. They are there, because my house was large and I was able to buy them ; and because, as Mrs. P. says, one must have buhl and *or molu*, and new forms of furniture, and do as well as one's neighbors, and show that one is rich, if he is so. They are there, in fact, because I couldn't help it. I didn't want them, but then I don't know what I did want. Somehow I don't feel as if I had a home, merely because orders were given to the best upholsterers and fancy-men in town to send a sample of all their wares to my house. To pay a morning call at Mrs. Potiphar's is, in

some ways, better than going shopping. You see more new and costly things in a shorter time. People say, "What a love of a chair!" "What a darling table!" "What a heavenly sofa!" and they all go and tease their husbands to get things precisely like them. When Kurz Pacha, the Sennaar minister, came to a dinner at my house, he said:

"Bless my soul! Mr. Potiphar, your house is just like your neighbor's."

I know it. I am perfectly aware that there is no more difference between my house and Crœsus's, than there is in two ten-dollar bills of the same bank. He might live in my house and I in his without any confusion. He has the same curtains, carpets, chairs, tables, Venuses, Apollos, busts, vases, etc. And he goes into his room and thinks it 's all a devilish bore, just as I do. We have each got to refurnish every few years, and, therefore, have no possible opportunity for attaching ourselves to the objects about us. Unfortunately Kurz Pacha particularly detested precisely what Mrs. P. most liked, because it is the fashion to like them. I mean the Louis Quatorze and the Louis Quinze things.

"Taste, dear Mrs. Potiphar," said the Pacha,

"was a thing not known in the days of those kings. Grace was entirely supplanted by grotesqueness, and now, instead of pure and beautiful Greek forms, we must collect these hideous things. If you are going backward to find models, why not go as far as the good ones? My dear madam, an *or molu* Louis Quatorze clock would have given Pericles a fit. Your drawing-rooms would have thrown Aspasia into hysterics. Things are not beautiful because they cost money; nor is any grouping handsome without harmony. Your house is like a woman dressed in Ninon de l'Enclos's bodice, with Queen Anne's hooped skirt, who limps in Chinese shoes, and wears an Elizabethan ruff round her neck, and a Druse's horn on her head. My dear madam, this is the kind of thing we go to see in museums. It is the old stock joke of the world."

By Jove! how mad Mrs. Potiphar was! She rose from the table, to the great dismay of Kurz Pacha, and I could only restrain her by reminding her that the Sennaar minister had but an imperfect idea of our language, and that in Sennaar people probably said what they thought when they conversed.

"You'd better go to Sennaar, then, yourself,

Mr. Potiphar," said my wife, as she smoothed her rumpled feathers.

"'Pon my word, madam, it 's my own opinion," replied I.

Kurz Pacha, who is a philosopher (of the Sennaar school), asks me if people have no ideas of their own in building houses. I answer, none that I know of, except that of getting the house built. The fact is, it is as much as Paul Potiphar can do to make the money to erect his palatial residence, and then to keep it going. There are a great many fine statues in my house, but I know nothing about them ; I don't see why we should have such heathen images in reputable houses. But Mrs. P. say:

"Pooh! have you no love for the fine arts."

There it is! It does n't do not to love the fine arts; so Polly is continually cluttering up the halls and staircases with marble, and sending me heavy bills for the same.

When the house was ready, and my wife had purchased the furniture, she came and said to me:

"Now, my dear P., there is one thing we have n't thought of."

"What's that?"

"Pictures, you know, dear."

"What do you want pictures for?" growled I, and rather surlily, I am afraid.

"Why, to furnish the walls; what do you suppose we want pictures for?"

"I tell you, Polly," said I, "that pictures are the most extravagant kind of furniture. Pshaw! a man rubs and dabbles a little upon a canvas two feet square, and then cooly asks three hundred dollars for it."

"Dear me, Pot," she answered, "I don't want home-made pictures. What an idea! Do you think I 'd have pictures on my walls that were painted in this country?—No, my dear husband, let us have some choice specimens of the old masters. A landscape by Rayfel, for instance; or one of Angel's fruit-pieces, or a cattle scene by Verynees, or a Madonna of Giddo's, or a boar-hunt of Hannibal Crack-eye's."

What was the use of fighting against this sort of thing? I told her to have it her own way. Mrs. P. consulted Singe, the pastry cook, who told her his cousin had just come out from Italy with a lot of the very finest pictures in the world, which he had bribed one of the Pope's guard to steal from the Vatican, and which he would sell at a bargain.

They hang on my walls, now. They represent nothing in particular; but in certain lights, if you look very closely, you can easily recognize something in them that looks like a lump of something brown. There is one very ugly woman with a convulsive child in her arms, to which Mrs. P. directly takes all her visitors, and asks them to admire the beautiful Shay douver of Giddo's. When I go out to dinner with people that talk of pictures and books, and that kind of thing, I don't like to seem behind; so I say, in a critical way, that Giddo was a good painter. None of them contradict me, and one day when somebody asked: "Which of his pictures do you prefer?" I answered straight, "His Shay douver," and no more questions were asked.

They hang all about the house now. The Giddo is in the dining-room. I asked the Sennaar minister if it wasn't odd to have a religious picture in the dining-room. He smiled, and said that it was perfectly proper if I liked it, and if the picture of such an ugly woman didn't take away my appetite.

"What difference does it make," said he, in the Sennaar manner; "it would be equally out of keeping with every other room in your house.

My dear Potiphar, it is a perfectly unprincipled house, this of yours. If your mind were in the condition of your house, so ill-assorted, so confused, so overloaded with things that don't belong together, you would never make another cent. You have order, propriety, harmony, in your dealings with the Symmes's Hole Bore Co., and they are the secrets of your success. Why not have the same elements in your house? Why pitch every century, country, and fashion, higgledy-piggledy into your parlors and dining-rooms? Have every thing you can get, in heaven's name, but have every thing in its place. If you are a plodding tradesman, knowing and caring nothing about pictures, or books, or statuary, or *objets de vertu*, don't have them. Suppose your neighbor chooses to put them in his house. If he has them merely because he had the money to pay for them, he is the butt of every picture and book he owns.

"When I meet Mr. Crœsus in Wall street, I respect him as I do a king in his palace, or a scholar in his study. He is master of the occasion. He commands like Nelson at the Nile. I, who am merely a diplomatist, skulk and hurry along, and if Mr. Crœsus smiles I in-

wardly thank him for his charity. Wall street is Crœsus' sphere, and all his powers play there perfectly. But when I meet him in his house, surrounded by objects of art, by the triumphs of a skill which he does not understand, and for which he cares nothing,—of which, in fact, he seems afraid, because he knows any chance question about them would trip him up,—my feeling is very much changed. If I should ask him what *or molu* is, I don't believe he could answer, though his splendid *or molu* clock rang, indignant, from the mantel. But if I should say: 'Invest me this thousand dollars,' he would secure me eight per cent. It certainly is n't necessary to know what *or molu* is, nor to have any other *objet de vertu* but your wife. Then why should you barricade yourself behind all these things that you really cannot enjoy, because you don't understand? If you could not read Italian, you would be a fool to buy Dante, merely because you knew he was a great poet. And, in the same way, if you know nothing about matters of art, it is equally foolish for you to buy statues and pictures, although you hear on all sides that, as Mrs. P. says, one must love art.

"As for learning from your own pictures, you

know, perfectly well, that until you have some taste in the matter, you will be paying money for your pictures blindly, so that the only persons upon whom your display of art would make any impression, will be the very ones to see that you know nothing about it.

"In Sennaar, a man is literally 'the master of the house.' He is n't surrounded by what he does not understand; he is not obliged to talk book and picture, when he knows nothing about these matters. He is not afraid of his parlor, and you feel instantly upon entering the house the character of the master. Please, my dear Mr. Potiphar, survey your mansion and tell me what kind of a man it indicates. If it does not proclaim (in your case) the President of the Patagonia Junction,—a man shrewd, and hard, and solid, without taste or liberal cultivation,—it is a painted deceiver. If it tries to insinuate, by this chaotic profusion of rich and rare objects, that you are a cultivated, accomplished, tasteful, and generous man, it is a bad lie, because a transparent one. Why, my dear old Pot, the moment your servant opens the front door, a man of sense perceives the whole thing. You and Mrs. Potiphar are bullied by all the brilliancy you have conjured up. It is

the old story of the fisherman and the genii. And your guests all see it. They are too well-bred to speak of it; but I come from Sennaar, where we do not lay so much stress upon that kind of good-breeding. Mr. Paul Potiphar, it is one thing to have plenty of money, and quite another to know how to spend it."

Now, as I told him, this kind of talk may do very well in Sennaar, but it is absurd in a country like ours. How are people to know that I'm rich, unless I show it? I'm sorry for it, but how shall I help it, having Mrs. P. at hand?

"How about the library?" said she one day.

"What library?" inquired I.

"Why, our library, of course."

"I haven't any."

"Do you mean to have such a house as this without a library?"

"Why," said I, plaintively, "I don't read books—I never did, and I never shall; and I don't care anything about them. Why should I have a library?"

"Why, because it's part of a house like this."

"Mrs. P., are you fond of books?"

"No, not particularly. But one must have some regard to appearances. Suppose we are Hottentots, you don't want us to look so, do you?"

I thought that it was quite as barbarous to imprison a lot of books that we should never open, and that would stand in guilt upon the shelves, silently laughing us to scorn, as not to have them if we didn't want them. I proposed a compromise.

"Is it the looks of the thing, Mrs. P.?" said I.

"That 's all," she answered.

"O! well, I'll arrange it."

So I had my shelves built, and my old friends Matthews and Rider furnished me with complete sets of handsome gilt covers to all the books that no gentleman's library should be without, which I arranged, carefully, upon the shelves, and had the best-looking library in town. I locked 'em in, and the key is always lost when anybody wants to take down a book. However, it was a good investment in leather, for it brings me in the reputation of a reading man and a patron of literature.

Mrs. P. is a religious woman—the Rev. Cream Cheese takes care of that—but only yesterday she proposed something to me that smells very strongly of candlesticks.

"Pot, I want a *prie-dieu*."

"Pray-do what?" answered I.

"Stop, you wicked man. I say I want a kneeling-chair."

"A kneeling-chair?" I gasped, utterly confused.

"A *prie-dieu*—a *prie-dieu*—to pray in, you know."

My Sennaar friend, who was at table, choked. When he recovered, and we were sipping the "Blue seal," he told me that he thought Mrs. Potiphar in a *prie-dieu* was rather a more amusing idea than Giddo's Madonna in the dining-room.

"She will insist upon its being carved handsomely in walnut. She will not pray upon pine. It is a romantic, not a religious, whim. She'll want a missal next, vellum or no prayers. This is piety of the 'Lady Alice' school. It belongs to a fine lady and a fine house precisely as your library does, and it will be precisely as genuine. Mrs. Potiphar in a *prie-dieu* is like that blue morocco Comus in your library. It is charming to look at, but there's nothing in it. Let her have the *prie-dieu* by all means, and then begin to build a chapel. No gentleman's house should be without a chapel. You'll have to come to it, Potiphar. You'll have to hear Cream Cheese read morning prayers in a

purple chasuble—*que sais-je?* You'll see religion made a part of the newest fashion in houses, as you already see literature and art, and with just as much reality and reason."

Privately, I am glad the Sennaar minister has gone out of town. It's bad enough to be uncomfortable in your own house without knowing why; but to have a philosopher of the Sennaar school show you why you are so, is cutting it rather too fat. I am gradually getting resigned to my house. I've got one more struggle to go through next week in Mrs. Potiphar's musical party. The morning soirées are over for the season, and Mrs. P. begins to talk of the watering-places. I am getting gradually resigned; but only gradually.

Oh! dear me, I wonder if this is the "home, sweet home" business the girls used to sing about! Music does certainly alter cases. I can't quite get used to it. Last week I was one morning in the basement breakfast-room, and I heard an extra cried. I ran out of the area door—dear me!—before I thought what I was about, I emerged bareheaded from under the steps, and ran a little way after the boy. I know it wasn't proper. I am sorry, very sorry. I am afraid Mrs. Crœsus saw me; I know Mrs.

Gnu told it all about that morning: and Mrs. Settum Downe called directly upon Mrs. Potiphar, to know if it were really true that I had lost my wits, as every body was saying. I don't know what Mrs. P. answered. I am sorry to have compromised her so. I went immediately and ordered a pray-do of the blackest walnut. My resignation is very gradual, Kurz Pacha says they put on gravestones in Sennaar three Latin words—do you know Latin? if you don't, come and borrow some of my books. The words are: *ora pro me!*

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

BORN 1819.

ON A CERTAIN CONDESCENSION IN FOREIGNERS.*

By JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

WALKING one day toward the Village, as we used to call it in the good old days when almost every dweller in the town had been born in it, I was enjoying that delicious sense of disenthralment from the actual which the deepening twilight brings with it, giving as it does a sort of obscure novelty to things familiar. The coolness, the hush, broken only by the distant bleat of some belated goat, querulous to be disburthened of her milky load, the few faint stars, more guessed as yet than seen, the sense that the coming dark would so soon fold me in the secure privacy of its disguise,—all things combined in a result as near absolute peace as can be hoped for by a man who knows that there is a writ out against him in the hands of the printer's devil.

* From "My Study Windows," through the courtesy of Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin, & Co.

For the moment, I was enjoying the blessed privilege of thinking without being called on to stand and deliver what I thought to the small public who are good enough to take any interest therein. I love old ways, and the path I was walking felt kindly to the feet it had known for almost fifty years. How many fleeting impressions it had shared with me! How many times I had lingered to study the shadows of the leaves mezzotinted upon the turf that edged it by the moon, of the bare boughs etched with a touch beyond Rembrandt by the same unconscious artist on the smooth page of snow! If I turned round, through dusky tree-gaps came the first twinkle of evening lamps in the dear old homestead. On Corey's hill I could see these tiny pharoses of love and home and sweet domestic thoughts flash out one by one across the blackening salt-meadow between. How much has not kerosene added to the cheerfulness of our evening landscape! A pair of night-herons flapped heavily over me toward the hidden river. The war was ended. I might walk townward without that aching dread of bulletins that had darkened the July sunshine and twice made the scarlet leaves of October seem stained with

blood. I remembered with a pang, half-proud, half-painful, how, so many years ago, I had walked over the same path and felt round my finger the soft pressure of a little hand that was one day to harden with faithful grip of sabre. On how many paths, leading to how many homes where proud Memory does all she can to fill up the fireside gaps with shining shapes, must not men be walking in just such pensive mood as I? Ah, young heroes, safe in immortal youth as those of Homer, you at least carried your ideal hence untarnished! It is locked for you beyond moth or rust in the treasure-chamber of Death.

Is not a country, I thought, that has had such as they in it, that could give such as they a brave joy in dying for it, worth something then? And as I felt more and more the soothing magic of evening's cool palm upon my temples, as my fancy came home from its revery, and my senses, with reawakened curiosity, ran to the front windows again from the viewless closet of abstraction, and felt a strange charm in finding the old tree and shabby fence still there under the travesty of falling night, nay, were conscious of an unsuspected newness in familiar stars and the fading outlines of hills

my earliest horizon, I was conscious of an immortal soul, and could not but rejoice in the unwaning goodliness of the world into which I had been born without any merit of my own. I thought of dear Henry Vaughan's rainbow, "Still young and fine!" I remembered people who had to go over to the Alps to learn what the divine silence of snow was, who must run to Italy before they were conscious of the miracle wrought every day under their very noses by the sunset, who must call upon the Berkshire hills to teach them what a painter autumn was, while close at hand the Fresh Pond meadows made all oriels cheap with hues that showed as if a sunset-cloud had been wrecked among their maples. One might be worse off than even in America, I thought. There are some things so elastic that even the heavy roller of democracy cannot flatten them altogether down. The mind can weave itself warmly in the cocoon of its own thoughts and dwell a hermit anywhere. A country without traditions, without ennobling associations, a scramble of *parvenus*, with a horrible consciousness of shoddy running through politics, manners, art, literature, nay, religion itself? I confess, it did not seem to me there in that

illimitable quiet, that serene self-possession of nature, where Collins might have brooded his "Ode to Evening," or where those verses on Solitude in Dodsley's Collection, that Hawthorne liked so much, might have been composed. Traditions? Granting that we had none, all that is worth having in them is the common property of the soul,—an estate in gavelkind for all the sons of Adam,—and, moreover, if a man cannot stand on his two feet (the prime quality of whoever has left any tradition behind him), were it not better for him to be honest about it at once, and go down on all fours? And for associations, if one have not the wit to make them for himself out of his native earth, no ready-made ones of other men will avail him much. Lexington is none the worse to me for not being in Greece, nor Gettysburg that its name is not Marathon. "Blessed old fields," I was just exclaiming to myself, like one of Mrs. Radcliffe's heroes, "dear acres, innocently secure from history, which these eyes first beheld, may you be also those to which they shall at last slowly darken"! when I was interrupted by a voice which asked me in German whether I was the Herr Professor, Doctor So-and-so? The

"Doctor" was my brevet of vaticination, to make the grade easier to my pocket.

One feels so intimately assured that he is made up, in part, of shreds and leavings of the past, in part of the interpolations of other people, that an honest man would be slow in saying *yes* to such a question. But "my name is So-and-so" is a safe answer, and I gave it. While I had been romancing with myself, the street-lamps had been lighted, and it was under one of these detectives that have robbed the Old Road of its privilege of sanctuary after nightfall that I was ambushed by my foe. The inexorable villain had taken my description, it appears, that I might have the less chance to escape him. Dr. Holmes tells us that we change our substance, not every seven years, as was once believed, but with every breath we draw. Why had I not the wit to avail myself of the subterfuge, and, like Peter, to renounce my identity, especially, as in certain moods of mind, I have often more than doubted of it myself? When a man is, as it were, his own front door, and is thus knocked at, why may he not assume the right of that sacred wood to make every house a castle, by denying himself to all visitations? I was truly not at home

when the question was put to me, but had to recall myself from all out-of-doors, and to piece my self-consciousness hastily together as well as I could before I answered it.

I knew perfectly well what was coming. It is seldom that debtors or good Samaritans way-lay people under gas-lamps in order to force money upon them, so far as I have seen or heard. I was also aware, from considerable experience, that every foreigner is persuaded, that by doing this country the favor of coming to it, he has laid every native thereof under an obligation, pecuniary or other, as the case may be, whose discharge he is entitled to on demand duly made in person or by letter. Too much learning (of this kind) has made me mad in the provincial sense of the word. I had begun life with the theory of giving something to every beggar that came along, though sure of never finding a native-born countryman among them. In a small way I was resolved to emulate Hatem Tai's tent, with its three hundred and sixty-five entrances, one for every day in the year,—I know not whether he was astronomer enough to add another for leap-years. The beggars were a kind of German-silver aristocracy; not real plate, to be sure, but better

than nothing. Where everybody was overworked, they supplied the comfortable equipoise of absolute leisure, so æsthetically needful. Besides, I was but too conscious of a vagrant fibre in myself, which too often thrilled me in my solitary walks with the temptation to wander on into infinite space, and by a single spasm of resolution to emancipate myself from the drudgery of prosaic serfdom to respectability and the regular course of things. This prompting has been at times my familiar demon, and I could not but feel a kind of respectful sympathy for men who had dared what I had only sketched out to myself as a splendid possibility. For seven years I helped maintain one heroic man on an imaginary journey to Portland,—as fine an example as I have ever known of hopeless loyalty to an ideal. I assisted another so long in a fruitless attempt to reach Mecklenburg-Schwerin, that at last we grinned in each other's faces when we met, like a couple of augurs. He was possessed by this harmless mania as some are by the North Pole, and I shall never forget his look of regretful compassion (as for one who was sacrificing his higher life to the fleshpots of Egypt) when I at last advised him somewhat strenuously to go

to the D——, whither the road was so much travelled that he could not miss it. General Banks, in his noble zeal for the honor of his country, would confer on the Secretary of State the power of imprisoning, in case of war, all these seekers of the unattainable, thus by a stroke of the pen annihilating the single poetic element in our humdrum life. Alas! not everybody has the genius to be a Bobbin-Boy, or, doubtless, all these also would have chosen that more prosperous line of life! But moralists, sociologists, political economists, and taxes have slowly convinced me that my beggarly sympathies were a sin against society. Especially was the Buckle doctrine of averages (so flattering to our free-will) persuasive with me; for as there must be in every year a certain number who would bestow an alms on these abridged editions of the Wandering Jew, the withdrawal of my quota could make no possible difference, since some destined proxy must always step forward to fill my gap. Just so many misdirected letters every year and no more! Would it were as easy to reckon up the number of men on whose backs fate has written the wrong address, so that they arrive by mistake in Congress and other places where

they do not belong! May not these wanderers of whom I speak have been sent into the world without any proper address at all? Where is our Dead-Letter Office for such? And if wiser social arrangements should furnish us with something of the sort, fancy (horrible thought!) how many a working man's friend (a kind of industry in which the labor is light and the wages heavy) would be sent thither because not called for in the office where he at present lies.

But I am leaving my new acquaintance too long under the lamp-post. The same Gano which had betrayed me to him revealed to me a well-set young man of about half my own age, as well dressed, so far as I could see, as I was, and with every natural qualification for getting his own livlihood as good, if not better, than my own. He had been reduced to the painful necessity of calling upon me by a series of crosses beginning with the Baden Revolution (for which, I own, he seemed rather young, —but perhaps he referred to a kind of revolution practised every season at Baden-Baden), continued by repeated failures in business, for amounts which must convince me of his entire respectability, and ending with our Civil War.

During the latter, he had served with distinction as a soldier, taking a main part in every important battle, with a rapid list of which he favored me, and no doubt would have admitted that, impartial as Jonathan Wild's great ancestor, he had been on both sides, had I baited him with a few hints of conservative opinions on a subject so distressing to a gentleman wishing to profit by one's sympathy and unhappily doubtful as to which way it might lean. For all these reasons, and, as he seemed to imply, for his merit in consenting to be born in Germany, he considered himself my natural creditor to the extent of five dollars, which he would handsomely consent to accept in greenbacks, though he preferred specie. The offer was certainly a generous one, and the claim presented with an assurance that carried conviction. But, unhappily, I had been led to remark a curious natural phenomenon. If I was ever weak enough to give any thing to a petitioner of whatever nationallty, it always rained decayed compatriots of his for a month after. *Post hoc ergo propter hoc* may not be always safe logic, but here I seemed to perceive a natural connection of cause and effect. Now, a few days before I had been so tickled

with a paper (professedly written by a benevolent American clergyman) certifying that the bearer, a hard-working German, had long "sofered with rheumatic paints in his limps," that, after copying the passage into my notebook, I thought it but fair to pay a trifling *honorarium* to the author. I had pulled the string of the shower-bath! It had been running shipwrecked sailors for some time, but forthwith it began to pour Teutons, redolent of *lager-bier*. I could not help associating the apparition of my new friend with this series of otherwise unaccountable phenomena. I accordingly made up my mind to deny the debt, and modestly did so, pleading a native bias toward impecuniosity to the full as strong as his own. He took a high tone with me at once, such as an honest man would naturally take with a confessed repudiator. He even brought down his proud stomach so far as to join himself to me for the rest of my townward walk, that he might give me his views of the American people, and thus inclusively of myself.

I know not whether it is because I am pigeon-livered and lack gall, or whether it is from an overmastering sense of drollery, but I am apt

to submit to such bastings with a patience which afterward surprises me, being not without my share of warmth in the blood. Perhaps it is because I so often meet with young persons who know vastly more than I do, and especially with so many foreigners whose knowledge of this country is superior to my own. However it may be, I listened for some time with tolerable composure as my self-appointed lecturer gave me in detail his opinions of my country and its people. America, he informed me, was without arts, science, literature, culture, or any native hope of supplying them. We were a people wholly given to money-getting, and who, having got it, knew no other use for it than to hold it fast. I am fain to confess that I felt a sensible itching of the biceps, and that my fingers closed with such a grip as he had just informed me was one of the effects of our unhappy climate. But happening just then to be where I could avoid temptation by dodging down a by-street, I hastily left him to finish his diatribe to the lamp-post, which could stand it better than I. That young man will never know how near he came to being assaulted by a respectable gentleman of middle age, at the corner of Church Street. I have

never felt quite satisfied that I did all my duty by him in not knocking him down. But perhaps he might have knocked *me* down, and then?

The capacity of indignation makes an essential part of the outfit of every honest man, but I am inclined to doubt whether he is a wise one who allows himself to act upon its first hints. It should be rather, I suspect, a *latent* heat in the blood, which makes itself felt in character, a steady reserve for the brain, warming the ovum of thought to life, rather than cooking it by a too hasty enthusiasm in reaching the boiling-point. As my pulse gradually fell back to its normal beat, I reflected that I had been uncomfortably near making a fool of myself,—a handy salve of euphuism for our vanity, though it does not always make a just allowance to Nature for her share in the business. What possible claim had my Teutonic friend to rob me of my composure? I am not, I think, especially thin-skinned as to other people's opinions of myself, having, as I conceive, later and fuller intelligence on that point than anybody else can give. Life is continually weighing us in very sensitive scales, and telling every one of us precisely what his real weight is to the last grain of dust. Who-

ever at fifty does not rate himself quite as low as most of his acquaintance would be likely to put him, must be either a fool or a great man, and I humbly disclaim being either. But if I was not smarting in person from any scattering shot of my late companion's commination, why should I grow hot at any implication of my country therein? Surely *her* shoulders are broad enough if yours or mine are not, to bear up under a considerable avalanche of this kind. It is the bit of truth in every slander, the hint of likeness in every caricature, that makes us smart. "Art thou *there*, old True-penny?" How did your blade know its way so well to that one loose rivet in our armor? I wondered whether Americans were over-sensitive in this respect, whether they were more touchy than other folks. On the whole, I thought we were not. Plutarch, who at least had studied philosophy, if he had not mastered it, could not stomach something Herodotus had said of Bœotia, and devoted an essay to showing up the delightful old traveller's malice and ill-breeding. French editors leave out of Montaigne's "Travels" some remarks of his about France, for reasons best known to themselves. Pachydermatous Deutschland, covered

with trophies from every field of letters, still winces under that question which Père Bouhours put two centuries ago, *Si un Allemand peut être bel-esprit?* John Bull grew apoplectic with angry amazement at the audacious persiflage of Pückler-Muskau. To be sure he was a prince,—but that was not all of it, for a chance phrase of gentle Hawthorne sent a spasm through all the journals of England. Then this tenderness is not peculiar to *us?* Console yourself, dear man and brother, whatever you may be sure of, be sure at least of this, that you are dreadfully like other people. Human nature has a much greater genius for sameness than for originality, or the world would be at a sad pass shortly. The surprising thing is, that men have such a taste for this somewhat musty flavor, that an Englishman, for example, should feel himself defrauded, nay, even outraged, when he comes over here and finds a people speaking what he admits to be something like English, and yet so very different from (or, as he would say, to) those he left at home. Nothing, I am sure, equals *my* thankfulness when I meet an Englishman who is *not* like every other or, I may add, an American of the same odd turn.

Certainly it is no shame to a man that he should be as nice about his country as about his sweetheart; and who ever heard even the friendliest appreciation of that unexpressive she that did not seem to fall infinitely short? Yet it would hardly be wise to hold every one an enemy who could not see her with our own enchanted eyes. It seems to be the common opinion of foreigners that Americans are *too* tender upon this point. Perhaps we are; and if so, there must be a reason for it. Have we had fair-play? Could the eyes of what is called Good Society (though it is so seldom true either to the adjective or noun) look upon a nation of democrats with any chance of receiving an undistorted image? Were not those, moreover, who found in the old order of things an earthly paradise, paying them quarterly dividends for the wisdom of their ancestors, with the punctuality of the seasons, unconsciously bribed to misunderstand if not to misrepresent us? Whether at war or at peace, there we were, a standing menace to all earthly paradises of that kind, fatal underminers of the very credit on which the dividends were based, all the more hateful and terrible that our destructive agency was so insidious, working in-

visible in the elements, as it seemed, active while they slept, and coming upon them in the darkness like an armed man. *Could* Laius have the proper feelings of a father toward Œdipus, announced as his destined destroyer by infallible oracles, and felt to be such by every conscious fibre of his soul? For more than a century the Dutch were the laughing-stock of polite Europe. They were butter-firkins, swillers of beer and schnaps, and their *vrouws* from whom Holbein painted the all-but loveliest of Madonnas, Rembrandt the graceful girl who sits immortal on his knee in Dresden, and Rubens his abounding goddesses, were the synonymes of clumsy vulgarity. Even so late as Irving the ships of the greatest navigators in the world were represented as sailing equally well stern-foremost. That the aristocratic Venetians should have

> "Riveted with gigantic piles
> Thorough the centre their new-catchëd miles,"

was heroic. But the far more marvellous achievement of the Dutch in the same kind was ludicrous even to republican Marvell. Meanwhile, during that very century of scorn, they were the best artists, sailors, merchants,

bankers, printers, scholars, jurisconsults, and statesmen in Europe, and the genius of Motley has revealed them to us, earning a right to themselves by the most heroic struggle in human annals. But, alas! they were not merely simple burghers who had fairly made themselves High Mightinesses, and could treat on equal terms with anointed kings, but their commonwealth carried in its bosom the germs of democracy. They even unmuzzled, at least after dark, that dreadful mastiff, the Press, whose scent is, or ought to be, so keen for wolves in sheep's clothing and for certain other animals in lions' skins. They made fun of Sacred Majesty, and, what was worse, managed uncommonly well without it. In an age when periwigs made so large a part of the natural dignity of man, people with such a turn of mind were dangerous. How could they seem other than vulgar and hateful?

In the natural course of things we succeeded to this unenviable position of general butt. The Dutch had thriven under it pretty well, and there was hope that we could at least contrive to worry along. And we certainly did in a very redoubtable fashion. Perhaps we deserved some of the sarcasm more than

our Dutch predecessors in office. We had nothing to boast of in arts or letters, and were given to bragging overmuch of our merely material prosperity, due quite as much to the virtue of our continent as to our own. There was some truth in Carlyle's sneer, after all. Till we had succeeded in some higher way than this, we had only the success of physical growth. Our greatness, like that of enormous Russia, was greatness on the map,—barbarian mass only; but had we gone down, like that other Atlantis, in some vast cataclysm, we should have covered but a pin's point on the chart of memory, compared with those ideal spaces occupied by tiny Attica and cramped England. At the same time, our critics somewhat too easily forgot that material must make ready the foundation for ideal triumphs, that the arts have no chance in poor countries. But it must be allowed that democracy stood for a great deal in our shortcoming. The *Edinburgh Review* never would have thought of asking, "Who reads a Russian book?" and England was satisfied with iron from Sweden without being impertinently inquisitive after her painters and statuaries. Was it that they expected too much from the

mere miracle of Freedom? Is it not the highest art of a Republic to make men of flesh and blood, and not the marble ideals of such? It may be fairly doubted whether we have produced this higher type of man yet. Perhaps it is the collective, not the individual, humanity that is to have a chance of nobler development among us. We shall see. We have a vast amount of imported ignorance, and, still worse, of native ready-made knowledge, to digest before even the preliminaries of such a consummation can be arranged. We have got to learn that statesmanship is the most complicated of all arts, and to come back to the apprenticeship system too hastily abandoned. At present, we trust a man with making constitutions on less proof of competence than we should demand before we gave him our shoe to patch. We have nearly reached the limit of the reaction from the old notion which paid too much regard to birth and station as qualifications for office, and have touched the extreme point in the opposite direction, putting the highest of human functions up at auction to be bid for by any creature capable of going upright on two legs. In some places, we have arrived

at a point at which civil society is no longer possible, and already another reaction has begun, not backward to the old system, but toward fitness either from natural aptitude or special training. But will it always be safe to let evils work their own cure by becoming unendurable? Every one of them leaves its taint in the constitution of the body-politic, each in itself, perhaps, trifling, yet all together powerful for evil.

But whatever we might do or leave undone, we were not genteel, and it was uncomfortable to be continually reminded that, though we should boast that we were the Great West till we were black in the face, it did not bring us an inch nearer to the world's West End. That sacred enclosure of respectability was tabooed to us. The Holy Alliance did not inscribe us on its visiting-list. The Old World of wigs and orders and liveries would shop with us, but we must ring at the area-bell, and not venture to awaken the more august clamors of the knocker. Our manners, it must be granted, had none of those graces that stamp the caste of Vere de Vere, in whatever museum of British antiquities they may be hidden. In short, we were vulgar.

This was one of those horribly vague accusations, the victim of which has no defence. An umbrella is of no avail against a Scotch mist. It envelops you, it penetrates at every pore, it wets you through without seeming to wet you at all. Vulgarity is an eighth deadly sin, added to the list in these latter days, and worse than all the others put together, since it perils your salvation in *this* world,—far the more important of the two in the minds of most men. It profits nothing to draw nice distinctions between essential and conventional, for the convention in this case *is* the essence, and you may break every command of the decalogue with perfect good-breeding, nay, if you are adroit, without losing caste. We, indeed, had it not to lose, for we had never gained it. "*How* am I vulgar?" asks the culprit, shudderingly. "Because thou art not like unto Us," answers Lucifer, Son of the Morning, and there is no more to be said. The god of this world may be a fallen angel, but he has us *there!* We were as clean—so far as my observation goes, I think we were cleaner—morally and physically, than the English, and therefore, of course, than everybody else. But we did not pronounce the diphthong *ou* as they

did, and we said *eether* and not *eyther*, following therein the fashion of our ancestors, who unhappily could bring over no English better than Shakespeare's; and we did not stammer as they had learned to do from the courtiers, who in this way flattered the Hanoverian king, a foreigner among the people he had come to reign over. Worse than all, we might have the noblest ideas and the finest sentiments in the world, but we vented them through that organ by which men are led rather than leaders, though some physiologists would persuade us that Nature furnishes her captains with a fine handle to their faces that Opportunity may get a good purchase on them for dragging them to the front.

This state of things was so painful that excellent people were not wanting who gave their whole genius to reproducing here the original Bull, whether by gaiters, the cut of their whiskers, by a factitious brutality in their tone, or by an accent that was forever tripping and falling flat over the tangled roots of our common tongue. Martyrs to a false ideal, it never occurred to them that nothing is more hateful to gods and men than a second-rate Englishman, and for the very reason that this planet

never produced a more splendid creature than the first-rate one, witness Shakespeare and the Indian Mutiny. Witness that truly sublime self-abnegation of those prisoners lately among the bandits of Greece, where average men gave an example of quiet fortitude for which all the stoicism of antiquity can show no match. If we could contrive to be not too unobtrusively our simple selves, we should be the most delightful of human beings, and the most original; whereas, when the plating of Anglicism rubs off, as it always will in points that come to much wear, we are liable to very unpleasing conjectures about the quality of the metal underneath. Perhaps one reason why the average Briton spreads himself here with such an easy air of superiority may be owing to the fact that he meets with so many bad imitations as to conclude himself the only real thing in a wilderness of shams. He fancies himself moving through an endless Bloomsbury, where his mere apparition confers honor as an avatar of the court-end of the universe. Not a Bull of them all but is persuaded he bears Europa upon his back. This is the sort of fellow whose patronage is so divertingly insufferable. Thank Heaven he is not the only specimen of cater-

cousinship from the dear old Mother Island that is shown to us! Among genuine things, I know nothing more genuine than the better men whose limbs were made in England. So manly-tender, so brave, so true, so warranted to wear, they make us proud to feel that blood is thicker than water.

But it is not merely the Englishman; every European candidly admits in himself some right of primogeniture in respect to us, and pats this shaggy continent on the back with a lively sense of generous unbending. The German who plays the bass-viol has a well-founded contempt, which he is not always nice in concealing, for a country so few of whose children ever take that noble instrument between their knees. His cousin, the Ph. D. from Göttingen, cannot help despising a people who do not grow loud and red over Aryans and Turanians, and are indifferent about their descent from either. The Frenchman feels an easy mastery in speaking his mother-tongue, and attributes it to some native superiority of parts that lifts him high above us barbarians of the West. The Italian *prima donna* sweeps a courtesy of careless pity to the over-facile pit which unsexes her with the *bravo!* innocently

meant to show a familiarity with foreign usage. But all without exception make no secret of regarding us as the goose bound to deliver them a golden egg in return for *their* cackle. Such men as Agassiz, Guyot, and Goldwin Smith come with gifts in their hands; but since it is commonly European failures who bring hither their remarkable gifts and acquirements, this view of the case is sometimes just the least bit in the world provoking. To think what a delicious seclusion of contempt we enjoyed till California and our own ostentatious *parvenus*, flinging gold away in Europe that might have endowed libraries at home, gave us the ill-repute of riches! What a shabby downfall from the Arcadia which the French officers of our Revolutionary War fancied they saw here through Rousseau-tinted spectacles! Something of Arcadia there really was, something of the Old Age; and that divine provincialism were cheaply repurchased could we have it back again in exchange for the tawdry upholstery that has taken its place.

For some reason or other, the European has rarely been able to see America except in caricature. Would the first review of the world have printed the *niaiseries* of Mr. Maurice Sand

as a picture of society in any civilized country? Mr. Sand, to be sure, has inherited nothing of his famous mother's literary outfit, except the pseudonyme. But since the conductors of the *Revue* could not have published his story because it was clever, they must have thought it valuable for its truth. As true as the last-century Englishman's picture of Jean Crapaud? We do not ask to be sprinkled with rose-water, but may perhaps fairly protest against being drenched with the rinsings of an unclean imagination. The next time the *Revue* allows such ill-bred persons to throw their slops out of its first-floor windows, let it honestly preface the discharge with a *gare de l' eau!* that we may run from under in season. And Mr. Duvergier d'Hauranne, who knows how to be entertaining! I know *le Français est plutôt indiscret que confiant*, and the pen slides too easily when indiscretions will fetch so much a page; but should we not have been *tant-soit-peu* more cautious had we been writing about people on the other side of the Channel? But then it is a fact in the natural history of the American long familiar to Europeans, that he abhors privacy, knows not the meaning of reserve, lives in hotels because of their greater pub-

licity, and is never so pleased as when his domestic affairs (if he may be said to have any), are paraded in the newspapers. Barnum, it is well known, represents perfectly the average national sentiment in this respect. However it be, we are not treated like other people, or perhaps I should say like people who are ever likely to be met with in society.

Is it in the climate? Either I have a false notion of European manners, or else the atmosphere affects them strangely when exported hither. Perhaps they suffer from the sea-voyage like some of the more delicate wines. During our Civil War an English gentleman of the highest description was kind enough to call upon me, mainly, as it seemed, to inform me how entirely he sympathized with the Confederates, and how sure he felt that we could never subdue them,—"they were the *gentlemen* of the country, you know." Another, the first greetings hardly over, asked me how I accounted for the universal meagreness of my countrymen. To a thinner man than I, or from a stouter man than he, the question *might* have been offensive. The Marquis of Hartington[1]

[1] One of Mr. Lincoln's neatest strokes of humor was his treatment of this gentleman when a laudable curiosity induced him to be presented to the President of the Broken Bubble. Mr. Lincoln persisted in calling him Mr. Partington. Surely

wore a secession badge at a public ball in New York. In a civilized country he might have been roughly handled; but here, where the *bienséances* are not so well understood, of course nobody minded it. A French traveller told me he had been a good deal in the British colonies, and had been astonished to see how soon the people became Americanized. He added, with delightful *bonhomie*, and as if he were sure it would charm me, that "they even began to talk through their noses, just like you!" I was naturally ravished with this testimony to the assimilating power of democracy, and could only reply that I hoped they would never adopt our democratic patent-method of seeming to settle one's honest debts, for they would find it paying through the nose in the long-run. I am a man of the New World, and do not know precisely the present fashion of Mayfair, but I have a kind of feeling that if an American (*mutato nomine, de te* is always frightfully possible) were to do this kind of thing under a European roof, it would induce some disagreeable reflections as to the ethical results of democracy. I read the other day in print

the refinement of good-breeding could go no farther. Giving the young man his real name (already notorious in the newspapers) would have made his visit an insult. Had Henri IV done this, it would have been famous.

the remark of a British tourist who had eaten large quantities of our salt, such as it is (I grant it has not the European savor), that the Americans were hospitable, no doubt, but that it was partly because they longed for foreign visitors to relieve the tedium of their dead-level existence, and partly from ostentation. What shall we do? Shall we close our doors? Not I, for one, if I should so have forfeited the friendship of L. S., most lovable of men. He somehow seems to find us human, at least, and so did Clough, whose poetry will one of these days, perhaps, be found to have been the best utterance in verse of this generation. And T. H., the mere grasp of whose manly hand carries with it the pledge of frankness and friendship, of an abiding simplicity of nature as affecting as it is rare!

The fine old Tory aversion of former times was not hard to bear. There was something even refreshing in it, as in a northeaster to a hardy temperament. When a British parson, travelling in Newfoundland while the slash of our separation was still raw, after prophesying a glorious future for an island that continued to dry its fish under the ægis of Saint George, glances disdainfully over his spectacles

in parting at the U. S. A., and forebodes for them a "speedy relapse into barbarism," now that they have madly cut themselves off from the humanizing influences of Britain, I smile with barbarian self-conceit. But this kind of thing became by degrees an unpleasant anachronism. For meanwhile the young giant was growing, was beginning indeed to feel tight in his clothes, was obliged to let in a gore here and there in Texas, in California, in New Mexico, in Alaska, and had the scissors and needle and thread ready for Canada when the time came. His shadow loomed like a Brocken-spectre over against Europe,—the shadow of what they were coming to, that was the unpleasant part of it. Even in such misty image as they had of him, it was painfully evident that his clothes were not of any cut hitherto fashionable, nor conceivable by a Bond Street tailor,—and this in an age, too, when every thing depends upon clothes, when, if we do not keep up appearances, the seeming-solid frame of this universe, nay, your very God, would slump into himself, like a mockery king of snow, being nothing, after all, but a prevailing mode. From this moment the young giant assumed the respectable aspect of a phenom-

enon, to be got rid of if possible, but at any rate as legitimate a subject of human study as the glacial period, or the silurian what-d'ye-call-ems. If the man of the primeval drift-heaps is so absorbingly interesting, why not the man of the drift that is just beginning, of the drift into whose irresistible current we are just being sucked whether we will or no? If I were in their place, I confess I should not be frightened. Man has survived so much, and contrived to be comfortable on this planet after surviving so much! I am something of a protestant in matters of government also, and am willing to get rid of vestments and ceremonies and to come down to bare benches, if only faith in God take the place of a general agreement to profess confidence in ritual and sham. Every mortal man of us holds stock in the only public debt that is absolutely sure of payment, and that is the debt of the Maker of this Universe to the Universe he has made. I have no notion of selling out my stock, in a panic.

It was something to have advanced even to the dignity of a phenomenon, and yet I do not know that the relation of the individual American to the individual European was bettered by

it; and that, after all, must adjust itself comfortably before there can be a right understanding between the two. We had been a desert, we became a museum. People came hither for scientific, and not social ends. The very cockney could not complete his education without taking a vacant stare at us in passing. But the sociologists (I think they call themselves so) were the hardest to bear. There was no escape. I have even known a professor of this fearful science to come disguised in petticoats. We were cross-examined as a chemist cross-examines a new substance. Human? Yes, all the elements are present, though abnormally combined. Civilized? Hm! that needs a stricter assay. No entomologist could take a more friendly interest in a strange bug. After a few such experiences, I, for one, have felt as if I were merely one of those horrid things preserved in spirits (and very bad spirits, too) in a cabinet. I was not the fellow-being of these explorers: I was a curiosity; I was a *specimen*. Hath not an American organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions even as a European hath? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? I will not keep on with Shylock to his next question but one.

Till after our Civil War it never seemed to enter the head of any foreigner, especially of any Englishman, that an American had what could be called a country, except as a place to eat, sleep, and trade in. Then it seemed to strike them suddenly. "By Jove, you know, fellahs don't fight like that for a shop-till!" No, I rather think not. To Americans America is something more than a promise and an expectation. It has a past and traditions of its own. A descent from men who sacrificed every thing and came hither, not to better their fortunes, but to plant their idea in virgin soil, should be a good pedigree. There was never colony save this that went forth, not to seek gold, but God. Is it not as well to have sprung from such as these as from some burly beggar who came over with Wilhelmus Conquestor, unless, indeed, a line grow better as it runs farther away from stalwart ancestors? And for history, it is dry enough, no doubt, in the books, but, for all that, is of a kind that tells in the blood. I have admitted that Carlyle's sneer had a show of truth in it. But what does he himself, like a true Scot, admire in the Hohenzollerns? First of all, that they were *canny*, a thrifty, forehanded race. Next, that they made a good

fight from generation to generation with the chaos around them. That is precisely the battle which the English race on this continent has been carrying doughtily on for two centuries and a half. Doughtily and silently, for you cannot hear in Europe "that crash, the death-song of the perfect tree," that has been going on here from sturdy father to sturdy son, and making this continent habitable for the weaker Old World breed that has swarmed to it during the last half-century. If ever men did a good stroke of work on this planet, it was the forefathers of those whom you are wondering whether it would not be prudent to acknowledge as far-off cousins. Alas, man of genius, to whom we owe so much, could you see nothing more than the burning of a foul chimney in that clash of Michael and Satan which flamed up under your very eyes?

Before our war we were to Europe but a huge mob of adventurers and shop-keepers. Leigh Hunt expressed it well enough when he said that he could never think of America without seeing a gigantic counter stretched all along the seaboard. Feudalism had by degrees made commerce, the great civilizer, contemptible. But a tradesman with sword on thigh, and

very prompt of stroke was not only redoubtable, he had become respectable also. Few people, I suspect, alluded twice to a needle in Sir John Hawkwood's presence, after that doughty fighter had exchanged it for a more dangerous tool of the same metal. Democracy had been hitherto only a ludicrous effort to reverse the laws of nature by thrusting Cleon into the place of Pericles. But a democracy that could fight for an abstraction, whose members held life and goods cheap compared with that larger life which we call country, was not merely unheard-of, but portentous. It was the nightmare of the Old World taking upon itself flesh and blood, turning out to be substance and not dream. Since the Norman crusader clanged down upon the throne of the *porphyro-geniti*, carefully draped appearances had never received such a shock, had never been so rudely called on to produce their titles to the empire of the world. Authority has had its periods not unlike those of geology, and at last comes Man claiming kingship in right of his mere manhood. The world of the Saurians might be in some respects more picturesque, but the march of events is inexorable, and it is by-gone.

The young giant had certainly got out of long-clothes, He had become the *enfant terrible* of the human household. It was not and will not be easy for the world (especially for our British cousins) to look upon us as grown up. The youngest of nations, its people must also be young and to be treated accordingly, was the syllogism,—as if libraries did not make all nations equally old in all those respects, at least, where age is an advantage and not a defect. Youth, no doubt has its good qualities, as people feel who are losing it, but boyishness is another thing. We had been somewhat boyish as a nation, a little loud, a little pushing, a little braggart. But might it not partly have been because we felt that we had certain claims to respect that were not admitted? The war which established our position as a vigorous nationality has also sobered us. A nation, like a man, cannot look death in the eye for four years, without some strange reflections, without arriving at some clearer consciousness of the stuff it is made of, without some great moral change. Such a change, or the beginning of it, no observant person can fail to see here. Our thought and our politics, our bearing as a people, are assuming a manlier tone. We have

been compelled to see what was weak in democracy as well as what was strong. We have begun obscurely to recognize that things do not go of themselves, and that popular government is not in itself a panacea, is no better than any other form except as the virtue and wisdom of the people make it so, and that when men undertake to do their own kingship, they enter upon the dangers and responsibilities as well as the privileges of the function. Above all, it looks as if we were on the way to be persuaded that no government can be carried on by declamation. It is noticeable also that facility of communication has made the best English and French thought far more directly operative here than ever before. Without being Europeanized, our discussion of important questions in statesmanship, in political economy, in æsthetics, is taking a broader scope and a higher tone. It had certainly been provincial, one might almst say local, to a very unpleasant extent. Perhaps our experience in soldiership has taught us to value training more than we have been popularly wont. We may possibly come to the conclusion, one of these days, that self-made men may not be always equally skilful in the manu-

facture of wisdom, may not be divinely commissioned to fabricate the higher qualities of opinion on all possible topics of human interest.

So long as we continue to be the most common-schooled and the least cultivated people in the world, I suppose we must consent to endure this condescending manner of foreigners toward us. The more friendly they mean to be, the more ludicrously prominent it becomes. They can never appreciate the immense amount of silent work that has been done here, making this continent slowly fit for the abode of man, and which will demonstrate itself, let us hope, in the character of the people. Outsiders can only be expected to judge a nation by the amount it has contributed to the civilization of the world; the amount, that is, that can be seen and handled. A great place in history can only be achieved by competitive examinations, nay, by a long course of them. How much new thought have we contributed to the common stock? Till that question can be triumphantly answered, or needs no answer, we must continue to be simply interesting as an experiment, to be studied as a problem, and not respected as an attained result or an accomplished solution.

Perhaps, as I have hinted, their patronizing manner toward us is the fair result of their failing to see here any thing more than a poor imitation, a plaster-cast, of Europe. And are they not partly right? If the tone of the uncultivated American has too often the arrogance of the barbarian, is not that of the cultivated as often vulgarly apologetic? In the America they meet with is there the simplicity, the manliness, the absence of sham, the sincere human nature, the sensitiveness to duty and implied obligation, that in any way distinguishes us from what our orators call "the effete civilization of the Old World?" Is there a politician among us daring enough (except a Dana here and there) to risk his future on the chance of our keeping our word with the exactness of superstitious communities like England? Is it certain that we shall be ashamed of a bankruptcy of honor, if we can only keep the letter of our bond? I hope we shall be able to answer all these questions with a frank *yes*. At any rate, we would advise our visitors that we are not merely curious creatures, but belong to the family of man, and that, as individuals, we are not to be always subjected to the competitive examination above mentioned, even if we acknowledged their competence as

an examining board. Above all, we beg them to remember that America is not to us, as to them, a mere object of external interest to be discussed and analyzed, but *in* us, part of our very marrow. Let them not suppose that we conceive of ourselves as exiles from the graces and amenities of an older date than we, though very much at home in a state of things not yet all it might be or should be, but which we mean to make so, and which we find both wholesome and pleasant for men (though perhaps not for *dilettanti*) to live in. "The full tide of human existence" may be felt here as keenly as Johnson felt it at Charing Cross, and in a larger sense. I know one person who is singular enough to think Cambridge the very best spot on the habitable globe. "Doubtless God *could* have made a better, but doubtless he never did."

It will take England a great while to get over her airs of patronage toward us, or even passably to conceal them. She cannot help confounding the people with the country, and regarding us as lusty juveniles. She has a conviction that whatever good there is in us is wholly English, when the truth is that we are worth nothing except so far as we have disinfected ourselves of Anglicism. She is es-

pecially condescending just now, and lavishes sugar-plums on us as if we had not outgrown them. I am no believer in sudden conversions, especially in sudden conversions to a favorable opinion of people who have just proved you to be mistaken in judgment and therefore unwise in policy. I never blamed her for not wishing well to democracy,—how could she?—but Alabamas are not wishes. Let her not be too hasty in believing Mr. Reverdy Johnson's pleasant words. Though there is no thoughtful man in America who would not consider a war with England the greatest of calamities, yet the feeling toward her here is very far from cordial, whatever our Minister may say in the effusion that comes after ample dining. Mr. Adams, with his famous "My Lord, this means war," perfectly represented his country. Justly or not, we have a feeling that we have been wronged, not merely insulted. The only sure way of bringing about a healthy relation between the two countries is for Englishmen to clear their minds of the notion that we are always to be treated as a kind of inferior and deported Englishman whose nature they perfectly understand, and whose back they accordingly stroke the wrong way of the fur with amazing perseverance. Let them learn to treat us natu-

rally on our merits as human beings, as they would a German or a Frenchman, and not as if we were a kind of counterfeit Briton whose crime appeared in every shade of difference, and before long there would come that right feeling which we naturally call a good understanding. The common blood, and still more the common language, are fatal instruments of misapprehension. Let them give up *trying* to understand us, still more thinking that they do, and acting in various absurd ways as the necessary consequence, for they will never arrive at that devoutly-to-be-wished consummation, till they learn to look at us as we are, and not as they suppose us to be. Dear old long-estranged mother-in-law, it is a great many years since we parted. Since 1660, when you married again, you have been a step-mother to us. Put on your spectacles, dear madam. Yes, we *have* grown, and changed likewise. You would not let us darken your doors, if you could help it. We know that perfectly well. But pray, when we look to be treated as men, don't shake that rattle in our faces, nor talk baby to us any longer.

> "Do, child, go to it grandam, child;
> Give grandam kingdom, and it grandam will
> Give it a plum, a cherry, and a fig!"

THOMAS CARLYLE.

BORN 1795—DIED 1882.

ON HISTORY.

[1830.]

By THOMAS CARLYLE.

CLIO was figured by the ancients as the eldest daughter of Memory, and chief of the Muses; which dignity, whether we regard the essential qualities of her art, or its practice and acceptance among men, we shall still find to have been fitly bestowed. History, as it lies at the root of all science, is also the first distinct product of man's spiritual nature; his earliest expression of what can be called Thought. It is a looking both before and after; as, indeed, the coming Time already waits, unseen, yet definitely shaped, predetermined, and inevitable, in the Time come; and only by the combination of both is the meaning of either completed. The Sibylline Books, though old, are not the oldest. Some nations have prophecy, some have not; but of all mankind, there is no tribe so rude that it has not attempted History, though several have not arithmetic enough to

count Five. History has been written with quipo-threads, with feather-pictures, with wampum-belts; still oftener with earth-mounds and monumental stone-heaps, whether as pyramid or cairn; for the Celt and the Copt, the Red man as well as the White, lives between two eternities, and warring against Oblivion, he would fain unite himself in clear conscious relation, as in dim unconscious relation he is already united, with the whole Future and the whole Past.

A talent for History may be said to be born with us, as our chief inheritance. In a certain sense all men are historians. Is not every memory written quite full with Annals, wherein joy and mourning, conquest and loss manifoldly alternate; and, with or without philosophy, the whole fortunes of one little inward Kingdom, and all its politics, foreign and domestic, stand ineffaceably recorded? Our very speech is curiously historical. Most men, you may observe, speak only to narrate; not in imparting what they have thought, which indeed were often a very small matter, but in exhibiting what they have undergone or seen, which is a quite unlimited one, do talkers dilate. Cut us off from Narrative, how would the stream of conversation, even among the

wisest, languish into detached handfuls, and among the foolish utterly evaporate! Thus, as we do nothing but enact History, we say little but recite it: nay, rather, in that widest sense, our whole spiritual life is built thereon. For, strictly considered, what is all Knowledge too but recorded Experience, and a product of History; of which, therefore, Reasoning and Belief, no less than Action and Passion, are essential materials?

Under a limited, and the only practicable shape, History proper, that part of History which treats of remarkable action, has, in all modern as well as ancient times, ranked among the highest arts, and perhaps never stood higher than in these times of ours. For whereas, of old, the charm of History lay chiefly in gratifying our common appetite for the wonderful, for the unknown; and her office was but as that of a Minstrel and Story-teller, she has now further become a Schoolmistress, and professes to instruct in gratifying. Whether with the stateliness of that venerable character, she may not have taken up something of its austerity and frigidity; whether in the logical terseness of a Hume or Robertson, the graceful ease and gay pictorial heartiness of a Herodotus or Froissart

may not be wanting, is not the question for us here. Enough that all learners, all inquiring minds of every order, are gathered round her footstool, and reverently pondering her lessons, as the true basis of Wisdom. Poetry, Divinity, Politics, Physics, have each their adherents and adversaries; each little guild supporting a defensive and offensive war for its own special domain; while the domain of History is as a Free Emporium, where all these belligerents peaceably meet and furnish themselves; and Sentimentalist and Utilitarian, Sceptic and Theologian, with one voice advise us: Examine History, for it is "Philosophy teaching by Experience."

Far be it from us to disparage such teaching, the very attempt at which must be precious. Neither shall we too rigidly inquire: How much it has hitherto profited? Whether most of what little practical wisdom men have, has come from study of professed History, or from other less boasted sources, whereby, as matters now stand, a Marlborough may become great in the world's business with no History save what he derives from Shakspeare's Plays? Nay, whether in that same teaching by Experience, historical Philosophy has yet properly

deciphered the first element of all science in this kind: What the aim and significance of that wondrous changeful Life it investigates and paints may be? Whence the course of man's destinies in this Earth originated, and whither they are tending? Or, indeed, if they have any course and tendency, are really guided forward by an unseen mysterious Wisdom, or only circle in blind mazes without recognizable guidance? Which questions, altogether fundamental, one might think, in any Philosophy of History, have, since the era when Monkish Annalists were wont to answer them by the long-ago extinguished light of their Missal and Breviary, been by most philosophical Historians only glanced at dubiously and from afar; by many, not so much as glanced at.

The truth is, two difficulties, never wholly surmountable, lie in the way. Before Philosophy can teach by Experience, the Philosophy has to be in readiness, the Experience must be gathered and intelligibly recorded. Now, overlooking the former consideration, and with regard only to the latter, let any one who has examined the current of human affairs, and how intricate, perplexed, unfathomable, even when seen into with our own eyes, are their

thousand-fold blending movements, say whether the true representing of it is easy or impossible. Social Life is the aggregate of all the individual men's Lives who constitute society; History is the essence of innumerable Biographies. But if one Biography, nay, our own Biography, study and recapitulate it as we may, remains in so many points unintelligible to us, how much more must these million, the very facts of which, to say nothing of the purport of them, we know not, and cannot know!

Neither will it adequately avail us to assert that the general inward condition of Life is the same in all ages; and that only the remarkable deviations from the common endowment and common lot, and the more important variations which the outward figure of Life has from time to time undergone, deserve memory and record. The inward condition of Life, it may rather be affirmed, the conscious or half-conscious aim of mankind, so far as men are not mere digesting-machines, is the same in no two ages; neither are the more important outward variations easy to fix on, or always well capable of representation. Which was the greater innovator, which was the more important personage in man's history,—he who first led armies over

the Alps, and gained the victories of Cannæ and Thrasymene; or the nameless boor who first hammered out for himself an iron spade? When the oak-tree is felled, the whole forest echoes with it; but a hundred acorns are planted silently by some unnoticed breeze. Battles and war-tumults, which for the time din every ear, and with joy or terror intoxicate every heart, pass away like tavern-brawls; and, except some few Marathons and Morgartens, are remembered by accident, not by desert. Laws themselves, political Constitutions, are not our Life, but only the house wherein our Life is led: nay, they are but the bare walls of the house; all whose essential furniture, the inventions and traditions, and daily habits that regulate and support our existence, are the work not of Dracos and Hampdens, but of Phœnician mariners, of Italian masons and Saxon metallurgists, of philosophers, alchymists prophets, and all the long-forgotten train of artists and artisans, who from the first have been jointly teaching us how to think and how to act, how to rule over spiritual and over physical Nature. Well may we say that of our History the more important part is lost without recovery; and,—as thanks-

givings were once wont to be offered "for unrecognized mercies,"—look with reverence into the dark untenanted places of the Past, where, in formless oblivion, our chief benefactors, with all their sedulous endeavors, but not with the fruit of these, lie entombed.

So imperfect is that same Experience, by which Philosophy is to teach. Nay, even with regard to those occurrences which do stand recorded, which, at their origin have seemed worthy of record, and the summary of which constitutes what we now call History, is not our understanding of them altogether incomplete; is it even possible to represent them as they were? The old story of Sir Walter Raleigh's looking from his prison window on some street tumult, which afterward three witnesses reported in three different ways, himself differing from them all, is still a true lesson to us. Consider how it is that historical documents and records originate; even honest records, where the reporters were unbiassed by personal regard; a case which, were nothing more wanted, must ever be among the rarest. The real leading features of an historical Transaction, whose movements that essentially characterize it, and alone deserve to be record-

ed, are nowise the foremost to be noted. At first, among the various witnesses, who are also parties interested, there is only vague wonder, and fear of hope, and the noise of Rumor's thousand tongues; till, after a season, the conflict of testimonies has subsided into some general issue; and then it is settled, by majority of votes, that such and such a "Crossing of the Rubicon," an "Impeachment of Strafford," a "Convocation of the Notables," are epochs in the world's history, cardinal points on which grand world-revolutions have hinged. Suppose, however, that the majority of votes was all wrong; that the real cardinal points lay far deeper; and had been passed over unnoticed, because no Seer, but only mere Onlookers, chanced to be there! Our clock strikes when there is a change from hour to hour; but no hammer in the horologe of Time peals through the universe when there is a change from Era to Era. Men understand not what is among their hands; as calmness is the characteristic of strength, so the weightiest causes may be most silent. It is, in no case, the real historical Transaction, but only some more or less plausible scheme and theory of the Transaction, or the harmonized result of

many such schemes, each varying from the other and all varying from truth, that we can ever hope to behold.

Nay, were our faculty of insight into passing things never so complete, there is still a fatal discrepancy between our manner of observing these, and their manner of occurring. The most gifted man can observe, still more can record, only the *series* of his own impressions: his observation, therefore, to say nothing of its other imperfections, must be *successive*, while the things done were often *simultaneous;* the things done were not a series, but a group. It is not in acted, as it is in written History; actual events are nowise so simply related to each other as parent and offspring are; every single event is the offspring not of one, but of all other events prior or contemporaneous, and will in its turn combine with all others to give birth to new: it is an ever-living, ever-working Chaos of Being, wherein shape after shape bodies itself forth from innumerable elements. And this Chaos, boundless as the habitation and duration of man, unfathomable as the soul and destiny of man, is what the historian will depict, and scientifically gauge, we may say, by threading it with single lines of a few ells

in length! For as all action is, by its nature, to be figured as extended in breadth and in depth, as well as in length; that is to say, is based on Passion and Mystery, if we investigate its origin; and spreads abroad on all hands, modifying and modified; as well as advances toward completion,—so all Narrative is, by its nature, of only one dimension; only travels forward toward one, or toward successive points: Narrative is *linear*, Action is *solid*. Alas for our "chains," or chainlets, of "causes and effects," which we so assiduously track through certain handbreadths of years and square miles, when the whole is a broad, deep Immensity, and each atom is "chained" and complected with all! Truly, if History is Philosophy teaching by Experience, the writer fitted to compose History is hitherto an unknown man. The experience itself would require All-knowledge to record it,—were the All-wisdom needful for such Philosophy as would interpret it, to be had for asking. Better were it that mere earthly Historians should lower such pretensions, more suitable for Omniscience than for human science; and aiming only at some picture of the things acted, which picture itself will at best be a poor approxima-

tion, leave the inscrutable purport of them an acknowledged secret; or at most, in reverent Faith, far different from that teaching of Philosophy, pause over the mysterious vestiges of Him, whose path is in the great deep of Time, whom History indeed reveals, but only all History, and in Eternity, will clearly reveal.

Such considerations truly were of small profit, did they, instead of teaching us vigilance and reverent humility in our inquiries into History, abate our esteem for them, or discourage us from unweariedly prosecuting them. Let us search more and more into the Past; let all men explore it, as the true fountain of knowledge; by whose light alone, consciously or unconsciously employed, can the Present and the Future be interpreted or guessed at. For though the whole meaning lies far beyond our ken; yet in that complex Manuscript, covered over with formless inextricably entangled unknown characters—nay, which is a *Palimpsest*, and had once prophetic writing, still dimly legible there,—some letters, some words, may be deciphered; and if no complete Philosophy, here and there an intelligible precept, available in practice, be gathered: well understanding, in the meanwhile, that it

is only a little portion we have deciphered; that much still remains to be interpreted; that History is a real Prophetic Manuscript, and can be fully interpreted by no man.

But the Artist in History may be distinguished from the Artisan in History; for here, as in all other provinces, there are Artists and Artisans; men who labor mechanically in a department, without eye for the Whole, not feeling that there is a Whole; and men who inform and ennoble the humblest department with an Idea of the Whole, and habitually know that only in the Whole is the Partial to be truly discerned. The proceedings and the duties of these two, in regard to History, must be altogether different. Not, indeed, that each has not a real worth, in his several degree. The simple husbandman can till his field, and by knowledge he has gained of its soil, sow it with the fit grain, though the deep rocks and central fires are unknown to him: his little crop hangs under and over the firmament of stars, and sails through whole untracked celestial spaces, between Aries and Libra; nevertheless, it ripens for him in due season, and he gathers it safe into his barn. As a husbandman he is blameless in disregarding those higher won-

ders; but as a thinker, and faithful inquirer into Nature, he were wrong. So likewise is it with the Historian, who examines some special aspect of History; and from this or that combination of circumstances, political, moral, economical, and the issues it has led to, infers that such and such properties belong to human society, and that the like circumstances will produce the like issue; which inference, if other trials confirm it, must be held true and practically valuable. He is wrong only, and an artisan, when he fancies that these properties, discovered or discoverable, exhaust the matter; and sees not, at every step, that it is inexhaustible.

However, that class of cause-and-effect speculators, with whom no wonder would remain wonderful, but all things in Heaven and Earth must be computed and "accounted for"; and even the Unknown, the Infinite in man's Life, had, under the words *enthusiasm*, *superstition*, *spirit of the age*, and so forth, obtained, as it were, an algebraical symbol and given value, —have now wellnigh played their part in European culture; and may be considered, as in most countries, even in England itself, where they linger the latest, verging toward extinc-

tion. He who reads the inscrutable Book of Nature as if it were a Merchant's Ledger, is justly suspected of having never seen that Book, but only some school Synopsis thereof; from which, if taken for the real Book, more error than insight is to be derived.

Doubtless, also, it is with a growing feeling of the infinite nature of History, that in these times, the old principle, division of labor, has been so widely applied to it. The Political Historian, once almost the sole cultivator of History, has now found various associates, who strive to elucidate other phases of human Life; of which, as hinted above, the political conditions it is passed under are but one, and though the primary, perhaps not the most important, of the many outward arrangements. Of this Historian himself, moreover, in his own special department, new and higher things are beginning to be expected. From of old, it was too often to be reproachfully observed of him, that he dwelt with disproportionate fondness in Senate-houses, in Battle-fields, nay even in King's Antechambers; forgetting, that far away from such scenes, the mighty tide of Thought and Action was still rolling on its wondrous course, in gloom and brightness;

and in its thousand remote valleys, a whole world of Existence, with or without an earthly sun of Happiness to warm it, with or without a heavenly sun of Holiness to purify and sanctify it, was blossoming and fading, whether the "famous victory" were won or lost. The time seems coming when much of this must be amended; and he who sees no world but that of courts and camps; and writes only how soldiers were drilled and shot, and how this ministerial conjuror out-conjured that other, and then guided, or at least held, something which he called the rudder of Government, but which was rather the spigot of Taxation, wherewith, in place of steering, he could tap, and the more cunningly the nearer the lees,—will pass for a more or less instructive Gazetteer, but will no longer be called an Historian.

However, the political Historian, were his work performed with all conceivable perfection, can accomplish but a part, and still leaves room for numerous fellow-laborers. Foremost among these comes the Ecclesiastical Historian; endeavoring, with catholic or sectarian view, to trace the progress of the Church; of that portion of the social establishments, which respects our religious condition; as the other

portion does our civil, or rather, in the long-run, our economical condition. Rightly conducted, this department were undoubtedly the more important of the two; inasmuch as it concerns us more to understand how man's moral well-being had been and might be promoted, than to understand in the like sort his physical well-being; which latter is ultimately the aim of all Political arrangements. For the physically happiest is simply the safest, the strongest; and, in all conditions of Government, Power (whether of wealth as in these days, or of arms and adherents as in old days) is the only outward emblem and purchase-money of Good. True Good, however, unless we reckon pleasure synonymous with it, is said to be rarely, or rather never, offered for sale in the market where that coin passes current. So that, for man's true advantage, not the outward condition of his life, but the inward and spiritual, is of prime influence; not the form of Government he lives under, and the power he can accumulate there, but the Church he is a member of, and the degree of moral elevation he can acquire by means of its instruction. Church history, then, did it speak wisely, would have momentous secrets to teach us:

nay, in its highest degree, it were a sort of continued Holy writ; our Sacred Books being, indeed, only a History of the primeval Church, as it first arose in man's soul, and symbolically embodied itself in his external life. How far our actual Church Historians fall below such unattainable standards, nay, below quite attainable approximations thereto, we need not point out. Of the Ecclesiastical Historian we have to complain, as we did of his Political fellow-craftsman, that his inquiries turn rather on the outward mechanism, the mere hulls and superficial accidents of the object, than on the object itself: as if the Church lay in Bishops' Chapter-houses, and Ecumenic Council-halls, and Cardinals' Conclaves, and not far more in the hearts of Believing Men; in whose walk and conversation, as influenced thereby, its chief manifestations were to be looked for, and its progress or decline ascertained. The History of the Church is a History of the Invisible as well as of the Visible Church; which latter, if disjoined from the former, is but a vacant edifice; gilded, it may be, and overhung with old votive gifts, yet useless, nay, pestilentially unclean; to write whose history is less important than to forward its downfall.

Of a less ambitious character are the Histories that relate to special separate provinces of human Action; to Sciences, Practical Arts, Institutions, and the like; matters which do not imply an epitome of man's whole interest and form of life; but wherein, though each is still connected with all, the spirit of each, at least its material results, may be in some degree evolved without so strict a reference to that of the others. Highest in dignity and difficulty, under this head, would be our histories of Philosophy, of man's opinions and theories respecting the nature of his Being, and relations to the Universe Visible and Invisible: which History, indeed, were it fitly treated, or fit for right treatment, would be a province of Church History; the logical or dogmatical province thereof; for Philosophy, in its true sense, is or should be the soul, of which Religion, Worship is the body; in the healthy state of things the Philosopher and Priest were one and the same. But Philosophy itself is far enough from wearing this character; neither have its Historians been men, generally speaking, that could in the smallest degree approximate it thereto. Scarcely since the rude era of the Magi and Druids has that same

healthy identification of Priest and Philosopher had place in any country: but rather the worship of divine things, and the scientific investigation of divine things, have been in quite different hands, their relations not friendly but hostile. Neither have the Brückers and Bühles, to say nothing of the many unhappy Enfields who have treated of that latter department, been more than barren reporters, often unintelligent and unintelligible reporters, of the doctrine uttered; without force to discover how the doctrine originated, or what reference it bore to its time and country, to the spiritual position of mankind there and then. Nay, such a task did not perhaps lie before them, as a thing to be attempted.

Art also and Literature are intimately blended with Religion; as it were, outworks and abutments, by which that highest pinnacle in our inward world gradually connects itself with the general level, and becomes accessible therefrom. He who should write a proper History of Poetry, would depict for us the successive Revelations which man had obtained of the Spirit of Nature; under what aspects he had caught and endeavored to body forth some glimpse of that unspeakable Beauty, which in

its highest clearness is Religion, is the inspiration of a Prophet, yet in one or the other degree must inspire every true Singer, were his theme never so humble. We should see by what steps men had ascended to the Temple; how near they had approached; by what ill-hap they had, for long periods, turned away from it, and grovelled on the plain with no music in the air, or blindly struggled toward other heights. That among all our Eichhorns and Wartons there is no such Historian, must be too clear to every one. Nevertheless, let us not despair of far nearer approaches to that excellence. Above all, let us keep the Ideal of it ever in our eye; for thereby alone have we even a chance to reach it.

Our histories of Laws and Constitutions, wherein many a Montesquieu and Hallam have labored with acceptance, are of a much simpler nature; yet deep enough if thoroughly investigated; and useful, when authentic, even with little depth. Then we have Histories of Medicine, of Mathematics, of Astronomy, Commerce, Chivalry, Monkery; and Goguets and Beckmanns have come forward with what might be the most bountiful contribution of

all, a History of Inventions. Of all which sorts, and many more not here enumerated, not yet devised and put in practice, the merit and the proper scheme may, in our present limits, require no exposition.

In this manner, though, as above remarked, all Action is extended three ways, and the general sum of human Action is a whole Universe, with all limits of it unknown, does History strive by running path after path, through the Impassable, in manifold directions and intersections, to secure for us some oversight of the Whole; in which endeavor, if each Historian look well around him from his path, tracking it out with the *eye*, not, as is more common, with the *nose*, she may at last prove not altogether unsuccessful. Praying only that increased division of labor do not here, as elsewhere, aggravate our already strong Mechanical tendencies, so that in the manual dexterity for parts we lose all command over the whole, and the hope of any Philosophy of History be farther off than ever—let us all wish her great and greater success.

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY.

BORN 1800—DIED 1859.

HISTORY.

By THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY.

TO write history respectably—that is, to abbreviate despatches, and make extracts from speeches, to intersperse in due proportion epithets of praise and abhorrence, to draw up antithetical characters of great men, setting forth how many contradictory virtues and vices they united, and abounding in *withs* and *withouts;* all this is very easy. But to be a really great historian is perhaps the rarest of intellectual distinctions. Many scientific works are, in their kind, absolutely perfect. There are poems which we should be inclined to designate as faultless, or as disfigured only by blemishes which pass unnoticed in the general blaze of excellence. There are speeches, some speeches of Demosthenes particularly, in which it would be impossible to alter a word without altering it for the worse. But we are acquainted with no history which approaches to our notion of what a history

ought to be—with no history which does not widely depart, either on the right hand or on the left, from the exact line.

The cause may easily be assigned. This province of literature is a debatable land. It lies on the confines of two distinct territories. It is under the jurisdiction of two hostile powers; and, like other districts similarly situated, it is ill-defined, ill-cultivated, and ill-regulated. Instead of being equally shared between its two rulers, the Reason and the Imagination, it falls alternately under the sole and absolute dominion of each. It is sometimes fiction. It is sometimes theory.

History, it has been said, is philosophy teaching by examples. Unhappily, what the philosophy gains in soundness and depth, the examples generally lose in vividness. A perfect historian must possess an imagination sufficiently powerful to make his narrative affecting and picturesque. Yet he must control it so absolutely as to content himself with the materials which he finds, and to refrain from supplying deficiencies by additions of his own. He must be a profound and ingenious reasoner. Yet he must possess sufficient self-command to abstain from casting his facts in

the mould of his hypothesis. Those who can justly estimate these almost insuperable difficulties will not think it strange that every writer should have failed, either in the narrative or in the speculative department of history.

It may be laid down as a general rule, though subject to considerable qualifications and exceptions, that history begins in Novel, and ends in Essay. Of the romantic historians Herodotus is the earliest and the best. His animation, his simple-hearted tenderness, his wonderful talent for description and dialogue, and the pure, sweet flow of his language, place him at the head of narrators. He reminds us of a delightful child. There is a grace beyond the reach of affectation in his awkwardness, a malice in his innocence, an intelligence in his nonsense, an insinuating eloquence in his lisp. We know of no writer who makes such interest for himself and his book in the heart of the reader. At the distance of three-and-twenty centuries, we feel for him the same sort of pitying fondness which Fontaine and Gay are said to have inspired in society. He has written an incomparable book. He has written something better perhaps than the best history;

but he has not written a good history; he is, from the first to the last chapter, an inventor. We do not here refer merely to those gross fictions, with which he has been reproached by the critics of later times. We speak of that coloring which is equally diffused over his whole narrative, and which perpetually leaves the most sagacious reader in doubt what to reject and what to receive. The most authentic parts of his work bear the same relation to his wildest legends which Henry the Fifth bears to the Tempest. There was an expedition undertaken by Xerxes against Greece; and there was an invasion of France. There was a battle at Platea; and there was a battle at Agincourt. Cambridge and Exeter, the Constable and the Dauphin, were persons as real as Demaratus and Pausanias. The harangue of the Archbishop on the Salic Law and the Book of Numbers differs much less from the orations which have in all ages proceeded from the Right Reverend bench, than the speeches of Mardonius and Artabanus from those which were delivered at the Council-board of Susa. Shakespeare gives us enumerations of armies, and returns of killed and wounded, which are not, we suspect, much

less accurate than those of Herodotus. There are passages in Herodotus nearly as long as acts of Shakespeare, in which every thing is told dramatically, and in which the narrative serves only the purpose of stage directions. It is possible, no doubt, that the substance of some real conversations may have been reported to the historian. But events which, if they ever happened, happened in ages and nations so remote that the particulars could never have been known to him, are related with the greatest minuteness of detail. We have all that Candaules said to Gyges, and all that passed between Astyagus and Harpagus. We are, therefore, unable to judge whether, in the account which he gives of transactions respecting which he might possibly have been well informed, we can trust to any thing beyond the naked outline; whether, for example, the answer of Gelon to the ambassadors of the Grecian confederacy, or the expressions which passed between Aristides and Themistocles at their famous interview, have been correctly transmitted to us. The great events are no doubt faithfully related. So, probably, are many of the slighter circumstances; but which of them it is impossible to ascertain. The

fictions are so much like the facts, and the facts so much like the fictions, that, with respect to many most interesting particulars, our belief is neither given nor withheld, but remains in an uneasy and interminable state of abeyance. We know that there is truth, but we cannot exactly decide where it lies.

The faults of Herodotus are the faults of a simple and imaginative mind. Children and servants are remarkably Herodotean in their style of narration. They tell every thing dramatically. Their *says hes* and *says shes* are proverbial. Every person who has had to settle their disputes knows that, even when they have no intention to deceive, their reports of conversation always require to be carefully sifted. If an educated man were giving an account of the late change of administration, he would say: "Lord Goderich resigned; and the King, in consequence, sent for the Duke of Wellington." A porter tells the story as if he had been hid behind the curtains of the royal bed at Windsor: "So Lord Goderich says: 'I cannot manage this business; I must go out.' So the King says, — says he: 'Well, then, I must send for the Duke of Wellington—that 's all.'" This is in the very manner of the father of history.

Herodotus wrote as it was natural that he should write. He wrote for a nation susceptible, curious, lively, insatiably desirous of novelty and excitement; for a nation in which the fine arts had attained their highest excellence, but in which philosophy was still in its infancy. His countrymen had but recently begun to cultivate prose composition. Public transactions had generally been recorded in verse. The first historians might, therefore, indulge, without fear of censure, in the license allowed to their predecessors the bards. Books were few. The events of former times were learned from tradition and from popular ballads; the manners of foreign countries from the reports of travellers. It is well known that the mystery which overhangs what is distant, either in space or time, frequently prevents us from censuring as unnatural what we perceive to be impossible. We stare at a dragoon who has killed three French cuirassiers, as a prodigy; yet we read, without the least disgust, how Godfrey slew his thousands, and Rinaldo his ten thousands. Within the last hundred years, stories about China and Bantam, which ought not to have imposed on an old nurse, were gravely laid down as foundations of political

theories by eminent philosophers. What the time of the Crusades is to us, the generation of Crœsus and Solon was to the Greeks of the time of Herodotus. Babylon was to them what Pekin was to the French Academicians of the last century.

For such a people was the book of Herodotus composed; and, if we may trust to a report, not sanctioned indeed by writers of high authority, but in itself not improbable, it was composed not to be read, but to be heard. It was not to the slow circulation of a few copies, which the rich only could possess, that the aspiring author looked for his reward. The great Olympian festival—the solemnity which collected multitudes, proud of the Grecian name, from the wildest mountains of Doris, and the remotest colonies of Italy and Libya, —was to witness his triumph. The interest of the narrative, and the beauty of the style, were aided by the imposing effect of recitation,—by the splendor of the spectacle,—by the powerful influence of sympathy. A critic who could have asked for authorities in the midst of such a scene, must have been of a cold and sceptical nature; and few such critics were there. As was the historian, such were the auditors,—

inquisitive, credulous, easily moved by religious awe or patriotic enthusiasm. They were the very men to hear with delight of strange beasts, and birds, and trees,—of dwarfs, and giants, and cannibals,—of gods, whose very names it was impiety to utter,—of ancient dynasties, which had left behind them monuments surpassing all the works of later times, —of towns like provinces,—of rivers like seas, —of stupendous walls, and temples, and pyramids,—of the rites which the Magi performed at daybreak on the tops of the mountains,—of the secrets inscribed on the eternal obelisks of Memphis. With equal delight they would have listened to the graceful romances of their own country. They now heard of the exact accomplishment of obscure predictions, of the punishment of crimes over which the justice of heaven had seemed to slumber,—of dreams, omens, warnings from the dead,—of princesses, for whom noble suitors contended in every generous exercise of strength and skill,—of infants, strangely preserved from the dagger of the assassin, to fulfil high destinies.

As the narrative approached their own times, the interest became still more absorbing. The chronicler had now to tell the story of that

great conflict, from which Europe dates its intellectual and political supremacy,—a story which, even at this distance of time, is the most marvellous and the most touching in the annals of the human race,—a story, abounding with all that is wild and wonderful, with all that is pathetic and animating; with the gigantic caprices of infinite wealth and despotic power,—with the mightier miracles of wisdom, of virtue, and of courage. He told them of rivers dried up in a day,—of provinces famished for a meal,—of a passage for ships hewn through the mountains,—of a road for armies spread upon the waves,—of monarchies and commonwealths swept away,—of anxiety, of terror, of confusion, of despair!—and then of proud and stubborn hearts tried in that extremity of evil, and not found wanting,—of resistance long maintained against desperate odds,—of lives dearly sold, when resistance could be maintained no more,—of signal deliverance, and of unsparing revenge. Whatever gave a stronger air of reality to a narrative so well calculated to inflame the passions, and to flatter national pride, was certain to be favorably received.

Between the time at which Herodotus is said

to have composed his history, and the close of the Peloponnesian War, about forty years elapsed—forty years, crowded with great military and political events. The circumstances of that period produced a great effect on the Grecian character; and nowhere was this effect so remarkable as in the illustrious democracy of Athens. An Athenian, indeed, even in the time of Herodotus, would scarcely have written a book so romantic and garrulous as that of Herodotus. As civilization advanced, the citizens of that famous republic became still less visionary, and still less simple-hearted. They aspired to know, where their ancestors had been content to doubt; they began to doubt, where their ancestors had thought it their duty to believe. Aristophanes is fond of alluding to this change in the temper of his countrymen. The father and son, in "The Clouds," are evidently representatives of the generations to which they respectively belonged. Nothing more clearly illustrates the nature of this moral revolution, than the change which passed upon tragedy. The wild sublimity of Æschylus became the scoff of every young Phidippides. Lectures on abstruse points of philosophy, the fine distinctions of casuistry, and the dazzling

fence of rhetoric, were substituted for poetry. The language lost something of that infantine sweetness which had characterized it. It became less like the ancient Tuscan, and more like the modern French.

The fashionable logic of the Greeks was, indeed, far from strict. Logic never can be strict where books are scarce, and where information is conveyed orally. We are all aware how frequently fallacies which, when set down on paper, are at once detected, pass for unanswerable arguments when dexterously and volubly urged in Parliament, at the bar, or in private conversation. The reason is evident. We cannot inspect them closely enough to perceive their inaccuracy. We cannot readily compare them with each other. We lose sight of one part of the subject, before another, which ought to be received in connection with it, comes before us; and as there is no immutable record of what has been admitted, and of what has been denied, direct contradictions pass muster with little difficulty. Almost all the education of a Greek consisted in talking and listening. His opinions on government were picked up in the debates of the assembly. If he wished to study metaphysics, instead of

shutting himself up with a book, he walked down to the market-place to look for a sophist. So completely were men formed to these habits, that even writing acquired a conversational air. The philosophers adopted the form of dialogue, as the most natural mode of communicating knowledge. Their reasonings have the merits and the defects which belong to that species of composition; and are characterized rather by quickness and subtlety, than by depth and precision. Truth is exhibited in parts, and by glimpses. Innumerable clever hints are given; but no sound and durable system is erected. The *argumentum ad hominem*, a kind of argument most efficacious in debate, but utterly useless for the investigation of general principles, is among their favorite resources. Hence, though nothing can be more admirable than the skill which Socrates displays in the conversations which Plato has reported or invented, his victories, for the most part, seem to us unprofitable. A trophy is set up; but no new province is added to the dominions of the human mind.

Still, where thousands of keen and ready intellects were constantly employed in speculating on the qualities of actions, and on the

principles of government, it was impossible that history should retain its old character. It became less gossiping and less picturesque; but much more accurate, and somewhat more scientific.

The history of Thucydides differs from that of Herodotus as a portrait differs from the representation of an imaginary scene; as the Burke or Fox of Reynolds differs from his Ugolino or his Beaufort. In the former case, the archetype is given; in the latter, it is created. The faculties which are required for the latter purpose are of a higher and rarer order than those which suffice for the former, and indeed necessarily comprise them. He who is able to paint what he sees with the eye of the mind, will surely be able to paint what he sees with the eye of the body. He who can invent a story, and tell it well, will also be able to tell, in an interesting manner, a story which he has not invented. If, in practice, some of the best writers of fiction have been among the worst writers of history, it has been because one of their talents had merged in another so completely, that it could not be severed; because, having long been habituated to invent and narrate at the same time, they found it impossible to narrate without inventing.

Some capricious and discontented artists have affected to consider portrait-painting as unworthy of a man of genius. Some critics have spoken in the same contemptuous manner of history. Johnson puts the case thus: The historian tells either what is false or what is true. In the former case he is no historian. In the latter, he has no opportunity for displaying his abilities. For truth is one: and all who tell the truth must tell it alike.

It is not difficult to elude both the horns of this dilemma. We will recur to the analogous art of portrait-painting. Any man with eyes and hands may be taught to take a likeness. The process, up to a certain point, is merely mechanical. If this were all, a man of talents might justly despise the occupation. But we could mention portraits which are resemblances, —but not mere resemblances; faithful,—but much more than faithful; portraits which condense into one point of time, and exhibit, at a single glance, the whole history of turbid and eventful lives—in which the eye seems to scrutinize us, and the mouth to command us—in which the brow menaces, and the lip almost quivers with scorn—in which every wrinkle is a comment on some important transaction. The

account which Thucydides has given of the retreat from Syracuse, is, among narratives, what Vandyk's Lord Strafford is among paintings.

Diversity, it is said, implies error: truth is one, and admits of no degrees. We answer, that this principle holds good only in abstract reasonings. When we talk of the truth of imitation in the fine arts, we mean an imperfect and a graduated truth. No picture is exactly like the original: nor is a picture good in proportion as it is like the original. When Sir Thomas Lawrence paints a handsome peeress, he does not contemplate her through a powerful microscope, and transfer to the canvas the pores of the skin, the blood-vessels of the eye, and all the other beauties which Gulliver discovered in the Brobdignaggian maids of honor. If he were to do this, the effect would not merely be unpleasant, but unless the scale of the picture were proportionately enlarged, would be absolutely *false*. And, after all, a microscope of greater power than that which he had employed, would convict him of innumerable omissions. The same may be said of history. Perfectly and absolutely true it cannot be: for to be perfectly and absolutely

true it ought to record *all* the slightest particulars of the slightest transactions—all the things done and all the words uttered during the time of which it treats. The omission of any circumstance, however insignificant, would be a defect. If history were written thus, the Bodleian Library would not contain the occurrences of a week. What is told in the fullest and most accurate annals bears an infinitely small proportion to what is suppressed. The difference between the copious work of Clarendon, and the account of the civil wars in the abridgment of Goldsmith, vanishes, when compared with the immense mass of facts, respecting which both are equally silent.

No picture, then, and no history, can present us with the whole truths: but those are the best pictures and the best histories which exhibit such parts of the truth as most nearly produce the effect of the whole. He who is deficient in the art of selection may, by showing nothing but the truth produce all the effect of the grossest falsehood. It perpetually happens that one writer tells less truth than another, merely because he tells more truths. In the imitative arts we constantly see this. There are lines in the human face, and objects

in landscape, which stand in such relations to each other, that they ought either to be all introduced into a painting together, or all omitted together. A sketch into which none of them enters, may be excellent; but if some are given and others left out, though there are more points of likeness, there is less likeness. An outline scrawled with a pen, which seizes the marked features of a countenance, will give a much stronger idea of it than a bad painting in oils. Yet the worst painting in oils that ever hung at Somerset House resembles the original in many more particulars. A bust of white marble may give an excellent idea of a blooming face. Color the lips and cheeks of the bust, leaving the hair and eyes unaltered, and the similarity, instead of being more striking, will be less so.

History has its foreground and its background; and it is principally in the management of its perspective that one artist differs from another. Some events must be represented on a large scale, others diminished; the great majority will be lost in the dimness of the horizon; and a general idea of their joint effect will be given by a few slight touches.

In this respect, no writer has ever equalled

Thucydides. He was a perfect master of the art of gradual diminution. His history is sometimes as concise as a chronological chart; yet it is always perspicuous. It is sometimes as minute as one of Lovelace's letters; yet it is never prolix. He never fails to contract and to expand it in the right place,

Thucydides borrowed from Herodotus the practice of putting speeches of his own into the mouths of his characters. In Herodotus this usage is scarcely censurable. It is of a piece with his whole manner. But it is altogether incongruous in the work of his successor, and violates, not only the accuracy of history, but the decencies of fiction. When once we enter into the spirit of Herodotus, we find no inconsistency. The conventional probability of his drama is preserved from the beginning to the end. The deliberate orations, and the familiar dialogues are in strict keeping with each other. But the speeches of Thucydides are neither preceded nor followed by any thing with which they harmonize. They give to the whole book something of the grotesque character of those Chinese pleasure-grounds, in which perpendicular rocks of granite start up in the midst of a soft green plain. Invention

is shocking, where truth is in such close juxtaposition with it.

Thucydides honestly tells us that some of these discourses are purely fictitious. He may have reported the substance of others correctly. But it is clear from the internal evidence that he has preserved no more than the substance. His own peculiar habits of thought and expression are everywhere discernible. Individual and national peculiarities are seldom to be traced in the sentiments, and never in the diction. The oratory of the Corinthians and Thebans is not less Attic, either in matter or in manner, than that of the Athenians. The style of Cleon is as pure, as austere, as terse, and as significant as that of Pericles.

In spite of this great fault it must be allowed that Thucydides has surpassed all his rivals in the art of historical narration, in the art of producing an effect on the imagination, by skilful selection and disposition, without indulging in the license of invention. But narration, though an important part of the business of an historian, is not the whole. To append a moral to a work of fiction, is either useless or superfluous. A fiction may give a more impressive effect to what is already known, but it can

teach nothing new. If it presents to us characters and trains of events to which our experience furnishes us with nothing similar, instead of deriving instruction from it we pronounce it unnatural. We do not form our opinions from it, but we try it by our preconcived opinions. Fiction, therefore, is essentially imitative. Its merit consists in its resemblance to a model with which we are already familiar, or to which at least we can instantly refer. Hence it is that the anecdotes which interest us most strongly in authentic narrative, are offensive when introduced into novels; that which is called the romantic part of the history is in fact the least romantic. It is delightful as history, because it contradicts our previous notions of human nature, and of the connection of causes and effects. It is, on that very account, shocking and incongruous in fiction. In fiction, the principles are given to find the facts: in history, the facts are given to find the principles; and the writer who does not explain the phenomena as well as state them, performs only one half of his office. Facts are the mere dross of history. It is from the abstract truth which interpenetrates them, and lies latent among them, like gold in the ore, that the mass

derives its whole value. And the precious particles are generally combined with the baser in such a manner that the separation is a task of the utmost difficulty.

Here Thucydides is deficient: the deficiency, indeed, is not discreditable to him. It was the inevitable effect of circumstances. It was in the nature of things necessary that, in some part of its progress through political science, the human mind should reach that point which it attained in his time. Knowledge advances by steps, and not by leaps. The axioms of an English debating club would have been startling and mysterious paradoxes to the most enlightened statesmen of Athens. But it would be as absurd to speak contemptuously of the Athenian on this account, as to ridicule Strabo for not having given us an account of Chili, or to talk of Ptolemy as we talk of Sir Richard Phillips. Still, when we wish for solid geographical information, we must prefer the solemn coxcombry of Pinkerton to the noble work of Strabo. If we wanted instruction respecting the solar system, we should consult the silliest girl from a boarding-school, rather than Ptolemy.

Thucydides was undoubtedly a sagacious

and reflecting man. This clearly appears from the ability with which he discusses practical questions. But the talent of deciding on the circumstances of a particular case is often possessed in the highest perfection by persons destitute of the power of generalization. Men skilled in the military tactics of civilized nations have been amazed at the far-sightedness and penetration which a Mohawk displays in concerting his stratagems, or in discerning those of his enemies. In England, no class possesses so much of that peculiar ability which is required for constructing ingenious schemes and for obviating remote difficulties, as the thieves and the thief-takers. Women have more of this dexterity than men. Lawyers have more of it than statesmen: statesmen have more of it than philosophers. Monk had more of it than Harrington and all his club. Walpole had more of it than Adam Smith or Beccaria. Indeed, the species of discipline by which this dexterity is acquired, tends to contract the mind and to render it incapable of abstract reasoning.

The Grecian statesmen of the age of Thucydides were distinguished by their practical sagacity, their insight into motives, their skill

in devising means for the attainment of their ends. A state of society in which the rich were constantly planning the oppression of the poor, and the poor the spoliation of the rich, in which the ties of party had superseded those of country, in which revolutions and counter-revolutions were events of daily occurrence, was naturally prolific in desperate and crafty political adventurers. This was the very school in which men were likely to acquire the dissimulation of Mazarine, the judicious temerity of Richelieu, the penetration, the exquisite tact, the almost instinctive presentiment of approaching events which gave so much authority to the counsel of Shaftesbury, that "it was as if a man had inquired of the oracle of God." In this school Thucydides studied; and his wisdom is that which such a school would naturally afford. He judges better of circumstances than of principles. The more a question is narrowed, the better he reasons upon it. His work suggests many most important considerations respecting the first principles of government and morals, the growth of factions, the organization of armies, and the mutual relations of communities. Yet all his general observations on these subjects are very super-

ficial. His most judicious remarks differ from the remarks of a really philosophical historian, as a sum correctly cast up by a book-keeper, from a general expression discovered by an algebraist. The former is useful only in a single transaction; the latter may be applied to an infinite number of cases.

This opinion will, we fear, be considered as heterodox. For, not to speak of the illusion which the sight of a Greek type, or the sound of a Greek diphthong, often produces, there are some peculiarities in the manner of Thucydides, which in no small degree have tended to secure to him the reputation of profundity. His book is evidently the book of a man and a statesman; and in this respect presents a remarkable contrast to the delightful childishness of Herodotus. Throughout it there is an air of matured power, of grave and melancholy reflection, of impartiality and habitual self-command. His feelings are rarely indulged, and speedily repressed. Vulgar prejudices of every kind, and particularly vulgar superstitions, he treats with a cold and sober disdain peculiar to himself. His style is weighty, condensed, antithetical, and not unfrequently obscure. But when we look at his political

philosophy, without regard to these circumstances, we find him to have been, what indeed it would have been a miracle if he had not been, simply an Athenian of the fifth century before Christ.

Xenophon is commonly placed, but we think without much reason, in the same rank with Herodotus and Thucydides. He resembles them, indeed, in the purity and sweetness of his style; but in spirit, he rather resembles that later school of historians, whose works seem to be fables, composed for a moral, and who, in their eagerness to give us warnings and example, forgot to give us men and women. The life of Cyrus, whether we look upon it as a history or a romance, seems to us a very wretched performance. The Expedition of the Ten Thousand, and the History of Grecian Affairs, are certainly pleasant reading; but they indicate no great power of mind. In truth Xenophon, though his taste was elegant, his disposition amiable, and his intercourse with the world extensive, had, we suspect, rather a weak head. Such was evidently the opinion of that extraordinary man to whom he early attached himself, and for whose memory he entertained an idolatrous veneration. He

came in only for the milk with which Socrates nourished his babes in philosophy. A few saws of morality, and a few of the simplest doctrines of natural religion, were enough for the good young man. The strong meat, the bold speculations on physical and metaphysical science, were reserved for auditors of a different description. Even the lawless habits of a captain of mercenary troops could not change the tendency which the character of Xenophon early acquired. To the last, he seems to have retained a sort of heathen Puritanism. The sentiments of piety and virtue which abound in his works, are those of a well-meaning man, somewhat timid and narrow-minded, devout from constitution rather than from rational conviction. He was as superstitious as Herodotus, but in a way far more offensive. The very peculiarities which charm us in an infant, the toothless mumbling, the stammering, the tottering, the helplessness, the causeless tears and laughter, are disgusting in old age. In the same manner, the absurdity which precedes a period of general intelligence is often pleasing; that which follows it is contemptible. The nonsense of Herodotus is that of a baby. The nonsense of Xenophon is that of a dotard. His

stories about dreams, omens, and prophecies, present a strange contrast to the passages in which the shrewd and incredulous Thucydides mentions the popular superstitions. It is not quite clear that Xenophon was honest in his credulity; his fanaticism was in some degree politic. He would have made an excellent member of the Apostolic Camarilla. An Alarmist by nature, and Aristocrat by party, he carried to an unreasonable excess his horror of popular turbulence. The quiet atrocity of Sparta did not shock him in the same manner; for he hated tumult more than crimes. He was desirous to find restraints which might curb the passions of the multitude; and he absurdly fancied that he had found them in a religion without evidences or sanction, precepts or example, in a frigid system of Theophilanthropy, supported by nursery tales.

Polybius and Arrian have given us authentic accounts of facts, and here their merit ends. They were not men of comprehensive minds; they had not the art of telling a story in an interesting manner. They have in consequence been thrown into the shade by writers who, though less studious of truth than themselves, understood far better the art of producing effect,—by Livy and Quintus Curtius.

Yet Polybius and Arrian deserve high praise, when compared with the writers of that school of which Plutarch may be considered as the head. For the historians of this class we must confess that we entertain a peculiar aversion. They seem to have been pedants, who, though destitute of those valuable qualities which are frequently found in conjunction with pedantry, thought themselves great philosophers and great politicians. They not only mislead their readers in every page, as to particular facts, but they appear to have altogether misconceived the whole character of the times of which they write. They were inhabitants of an empire bounded by the Atlantic Ocean and the Euphrates, by the ice of Scythia and the sands of Mauritania; composed of nations whose manners, whose languages, whose religion, whose countenance and complexions, were widely different, governed by one mighty despotism, which had risen on the ruins of a thousand commonwealths and kingdoms. Of liberty, such as it is in small democracies; of patriotism, such as it is in small independent communities of any kind, they had, and they could have, no experimental knowledge. But they had read of men who exerted themselves

in the cause of their country, with an energy unknown in latter times, who had violated the dearest of domestic charities, or voluntarily devoted themselves to death for the public good; and they wondered at the degeneracy of their contemporaries. It never occurred to them, that the feelings which they so greatly admired, sprung from local and occasional causes; that they will always grow up spontaneously in small societies; and that, in large empires, though they may be forced into existence for a short time by peculiar circumstances, they cannot be general or permanent. It is impossible that any man should feel for a fortress on a remote frontier, as he feels for his own house; that he should grieve for a defeat in which ten thousand people whom he never saw have fallen, as he grieves for a defeat which has half unpeopled the street in which he lives; that he should leave his home for a military expedition, in order to preserve the balance of power, as cheerfully as he would leave it to repel invaders who had begun to burn all the cornfields in his neighborhood.

The writers of whom we speak should have considered this. They should have considered, that in patriotism, such as it existed amongst

the Greeks, there was nothing essentially and eternally good; that an exclusive attachment to a particular society, though a natural, and, under certain restrictions, a most useful sentiment, implies no extraordinary attainments in wisdom or virtue; that where it has existed in an intense degree, it has turned states into gangs of robbers, whom their mutual fidelity has rendered more dangerous, has given a character of peculiar atrocity to war, and has generated that worst of all political evils, the tyranny of nations over nations.

Enthusiastically attached to the name of liberty, these historians troubled themselves little about its definition. The Spartans, tormented by ten thousand absurd restraints, unable to please themselves in the choice of their wives, their suppers, or their company, compelled to assume a peculiar manner, and to talk in a peculiar style, gloried in their liberty. The aristocracy of Rome repeatedly made liberty a plea for cutting off the favorites of the people. In almost all the little commonwealths of antiquity, liberty was used as a pretext for measures directed against every thing which makes liberty valuable, for measures which stifled discussion, corrupted the administration of jus-

tice, and discouraged the accumulation of property. The writers, whose works we are considering, confounded the sound with the substance, and the means with the end. Their imaginations were inflamed by mystery. They conceived of liberty as monks conceive of love, as Cockneys conceive of the happiness and innocence of rural life, as novel-reading sempstresses conceive of Almack's and Grosvenor Square, accomplished Marquesses and handsome Colonels of the Guards. In the relation of events, and the delineation of characters, they have paid little attention to facts, to the costume of the times of which they pretend to treat, or to the general principles of human nature. They have been faithful only to their own puerile and extravagant doctrines. Generals and statesmen are metamorphosed into magnanimous coxcombs, from whose fulsome virtues we turn away with disgust. The fine sayings and exploits of their heroes remind us of the insufferable perfections of Sir Charles Grandison, and affect us with a nausea, similar to that which we feel when an actor, in one of Morton's or Kotzebue's plays, lays his hand on his heart, advances to the ground-lights, and mouths a moral sentence for the edification of the gods.

These writers, men who knew not what it was to have a country, men who have never enjoyed political rights, brought into fashion an offensive cant about patriotism and zeal for freedom. What the English Puritans did for the language of Christianity, what Scuderi did for the language of love, they did for the language of public spirit. By habitual exaggeration they made it mean. By monotonous emphasis they made it feeble. They abused it till it became scarcely possible to use it with effect.

Their ordinary rules of morality are deduced from extreme cases. The common regimen which they prescribe for society, is made up of those desperate remedies which only its most desperate distempers require. They look with peculiar complacency on actions, which even those who approve them consider as exceptions to laws of almost universal application—which bear so close an affinity to the most atrocious crimes, that even where it may be unjust to censure them, it is unsafe to praise them. It is not strange, therefore, that some flagitious instances of perfidy and cruelty should have been passed unchallenged in such company, that grave moralists, with no personal interest

at stake, should have extolled, in the highest terms, deeds of which the atrocity appalled even the infuriated factions in whose cause they were perpetrated. The part which Timoleon took in the assassination of his brother, shocked many of his own partisans. The recollection of it preyed long on his own mind. But it was reserved for historians who lived some centuries later to discover that his conduct was a glorious display of virtue, and to lament that, from the frailty of human nature, a man who could perform so great an exploit could repent of it.

The writings of these men, and of their modern imitators, have produced effects which deserve some notice. The English have been so long accustomed to political speculation, and have enjoyed so large a measure of practical liberty, that such works have produced little effect on their minds. We have classical associations and great names of our own, which we can confidently oppose to the most splendid of ancient times. Senate has not to our ears a sound so venerable as Parliament. We respect the Great Charter more than the laws of Solon. The Capitol and the Forum impress us with less awe than our own Westminster Hall and

Westminster Abbey, the place where the great men of twenty generations have contended, the place where they sleep together! The list of warriors and statesmen by whom our constitution was founded or preserved, from De Montfort down to Fox, may well stand a comparison with the Fasti of Rome. The dying thanksgiving of Sydney is as noble as the libation which Thrasea poured to Liberating Jove; and we think with far less pleasure of Cato tearing out his entrails, than of Russell saying, as he turned away from his wife, that the bitterness of death was past. Even those parts of our history, over which, on some accounts, we would gladly throw a veil, may be proudly opposed to those on which the moralists of antiquity loved most to dwell. The enemy of English liberty was not murdered by men whom he pardoned and loaded with benefits. He was not stabbed in the back by those who smiled and cringed before his face. He was vanquished on fields of stricken battle; he was arraigned, sentenced, and executed in the face of heaven and earth. Our liberty is neither Greek nor Roman, but essentially English. It has a character of its own,—a character which has taken a tinge from the

sentiments of the chivalrous ages, and which accords with the peculiarities of our manners and of our insular situation. It has a language, too, of its own, and a language singularly idiomatic, full of meaning to ourselves, scarcely intelligible to strangers.

Here, therefore, the effect of books such as those which we have been considering, has been harmless. They have, indeed, given currency to many very erroneous opinions with respect to ancient history. They have heated the imaginations of boys. They have misled the judgment, and corrupted the taste, of some men of letters, such as Akenside and Sir William Jones. But on persons engaged in public affairs they have had very little influence. The foundations of our constitution were laid by men who knew nothing of the Greeks, but that they denied the orthodox procession, and cheated the Crusaders; and nothing of Rome, but that the Pope lived there. Those who followed, contented themselves with improving on the original plan. They found models at home, and therefore they did not look for them abroad. But when enlightened men on the Continent began to think about political reformation, having no patterns before their eyes in

their domestic history, they naturally had recourse to those remains of antiquity, the study of which is considered throughout Europe as an important part of education. The historians of whom we have been speaking had been members of large communities, and subjects of absolute sovereigns. Hence it is, as we have already said, that they commit such gross errors in speaking of the little republics of antiquity. Their works were now read in the spirit in which they had been written. They were read by men placed in circumstances closely resembling their own, unacquainted with the real nature of liberty, but inclined to believe every thing good which could be told respecting it. How powerfully these books impressed these speculative reformers, is well known to all who have paid any attention to the French literature of the last century. But, perhaps, the writer on whom they produced the greatest effect, was Vittorio Alfieri. In some of his plays, particularly in "Virginia," "Timoleon," and "Brutus the Younger," he has even caricatured the extravagance of his masters.

It was not strange that the blind, thus led by the blind, should stumble. The transac-

tions of the French Revolution, in some measure, took their character from these works. Without the assistance of these works, indeed, a revolution would have taken place,—a revolution productive of much good and much evil: tremendous, but short-lived evil; dearly purchased, but durable good. But it would not have been exactly such a revolution. The style, the accessories, would have been in many respects different. There would have been less of bombast in language, less of affectation in manner, less of solemn trifling and ostentatious simplicity. The acts of legislative assemblies, and the correspondence of diplomatists, would not have been disgraced by rants worthy only of a college declamation. The government of a great and polished nation would not have rendered itself ridiculous, by attempting to revive the usages of a world which had long passed away, or rather of a world which had never existed except in the description of a fantastic school of writers. These second-hand imitations resembled the originals about as much as the classical feast with which the Doctor in Peregrine Pickle turned the stomachs of all his guests, resembled one of the suppers of Lucullus in the Hall of Apollo.

These were mere follies. But the spirit excited by these writers produced more serious effects. The greater part of the crimes which disgraced the revolution sprung indeed from the relaxation of law, from popular ignorance, from the remembrance of past oppression, from the fear of foreign conquest, from rapacity, from ambition, from party-spirit. But many atrocious proceedings must, doubtless, be ascribed to heated imagination, to perverted principle, to a distaste for what was vulgar in morals, and a passion for what was startling and dubious. Mr. Burke has touched on this subject with great felicity of expression. "The gradation of their republic," says he, "is laid in moral paradoxes. All those instances to be found in history, whether real or fabulous, of a doubtful public spirit, at which morality is perplexed, reason is staggered, and from which affrighted nature recoils, are their chosen and almost sole examples, for the instruction of their youth." The evil, we believe, is to be directly ascribed to the influence of the historians whom we have mentioned, and their modern imitators.

Livy had some faults in common with these writers. But on the whole he must be con-

sidered as forming a class by himself. No historian with whom we are acquainted has shown so complete an indifference to truth. He seems to have cared only about the picturesque effect of his book, and the honor of his country. On the other hand, we do not know, in the whole range of literature, an instance of a bad thing so well done. The painting of the narrative is beyond description vivid and graceful. The abundance of interesting sentiments and splendid imagery in the speeches is almost miraculous. His mind is a soil which is never overteemed, a fountain which never seems to trickle. It pours forth profusely; yet it gives no sign of exhaustion. It was probably to this exuberance of thought and language always fresh, always sweet, always pure, no sooner yielded than repaired, that the critics applied that expression which has been so much discussed, *lactea ubertas*.

All the merits and all the defects of Livy take a coloring from the character of his nation. He was a writer peculiarly Roman; the proud citizen of a commonwealth which had indeed lost the reality of liberty, but which still sacredly preserved its forms—in fact, the subject of an arbitrary prince, but in his own

estimation one of the masters of the world, with a hundred kings below him, and only the gods above him. He, therefore, looked back on former times with feelings far different from those which were naturally entertained by his Greek contemporaries, and which at a later period became general among men of letters throughout the Roman Empire. He contemplated the past with interest and delight, not because it furnished a contrast to the present, but because it had led to the present. He recurred to it, not to lose in proud recollections the sense of national degradation, but to trace the progress of national glory. It is true that his veneration for antiquity produced on him some of the effects which it produced on those who arrived at it by a very different road. He has something of their exaggeration, something of their cant, something of their fondness for anomalies and *lusus naturæ* in morality. Yet even here we perceive a difference. They talk rapturously of patriotism and liberty in the abstract. He does not seem to think any country but Rome deserving of love: nor is it for liberty as liberty, but for liberty as a part of the Roman institutions, that he is zealous.

Of the concise and elegant accounts of the campaigns of Cæsar little can be said. They are incomparable models for military despatches. But histories they are not, and do not pretend to be.

The ancient critics placed Sallust in the same rank with Livy; and unquestionably the small portion of his works which has come down to us is calculated to give a high opinion of his talents. But his style is not very pleasant, and his most powerful work, the account of the Conspiracy of Catiline, has rather the air of a clever party pamphlet than that of a history. It abounds with strange inconsistencies, which, unexplained as they are, necessarily excite doubts as to the fairness of the narrative. It is true, that many circumstances now forgotten may have been familiar to his contemporaries, and may have rendered passages clear to them which to us appear dubious and perplexing. But a great historian should remember that he writes for distant generations, for men who will preserve the apparent contradictions, and will possess no means of reconciling them. We can only vindicate the fidelity of Sallust at the expense of his skill. But, in fact, all the information which we have from contemporaries, respecting this

famous plot is liable to the same objection, and is read by discerning men with the same incredulity. It is all on one side. No answer has reached our times. Yet, on the showing of the accusers, the accused seem entitled to acquittal. Catiline, we are told, intrigued with a Vestal virgin, and murdered his own son. His house was a den of gamblers and debauchees. No young man could cross his threshold without danger to his fortune and reputation. Yet this is the man with whom Cicero was willing to coalesce in a contest for the first magistracy of the republic; and whom he described long after the fatal termination of the conspiracy, as an accomplished hypocrite, by whom he had himself been deceived, and who had acted with consummate skill the character of a good citizen and a good friend. We are told that the plot was the most wicked and desperate ever known, and, almost in the same breath, that the great body of the people, and many of the nobles, favored it; that the richest citizens of Rome were eager for the spoliation of all property, and its highest functionaries for the destruction of all order; that Crassus, Cæsar, the Prætor Lentulus, one of the consuls of the year, one of the consuls elect, were

proved or suspected to be engaged in a scheme for subverting institutions to which they owed the highest honors, and introducing universal anarchy. We are told, that a government which knew all this suffered the conspirator, whose rank, talents, and courage rendered him most dangerous, to quit Rome without molestation. We are told, that bondmen and gladiators were to be armed against the citizens. Yet we find that Catiline rejected the slaves who crowded to enlist in his army, lest, as Sallust himself expresses it, "he should seem to identify their cause with that of the citizens." Finally, we are told that the magistrate, who was universally allowed to have saved all classes of his countrymen from conflagration and massacre, rendered himself so unpopular by his conduct, that a marked insult was offered to him at the expiration of his office, and a severe punishment inflicted on him shortly after.

Sallust tells us what, indeed, the letters and speeches of Cicero sufficiently prove, that some persons considered the shocking and atrocious parts of the plot as mere inventions of the government, designed to excuse its unconstitutional measures. We must confess ourselves to be of that opinion. There was, undoubtedly,

a strong party desirous to change the administration. While Pompey held the command of an army, they could not effect their purpose without preparing means for repelling force, if necessary, by force. In all this there is nothing different from the ordinary practice of Roman factions. The other charges brought against the conspirators are so inconsistent and improbable, that we give no credit whatever to them. If our readers think this scepticism unreasonable, let them turn to the contemporary accounts of the Popish Plot. Let them look over the votes of Parliament, and the speeches of the King; the charges of Scroggs, and the harangues of the managers employed against Strafford. A person who should form his judgment from these pieces alone, would believe that London was set on fire by the Papists, and that Sir Edmondbury Godfrey was murdered for his religion. Yet these stories are now altogether exploded. They have been abandoned by statesmen to aldermen, by aldermen to clergymen, by clergymen to old women, and by old women to Sir Harcourt Lees.

Of the Latin historians, Tacitus was certainly the greatest. His style, indeed, is not only faulty in itself, but is, in some respects, pecul-

iarly unfit for historical composition. He carries his love of effect far beyond the limits of moderation. He tells a fine story finely; but he cannot tell a plain story plainly. He stimulates till stimulants lose their power. Thucydides, as we have already observed, relates ordinary transactions with the unpretending clearness and succinctness of a gazette. His great powers of painting he reserves for events, of which the slightest details are interesting, The simplicity of the setting gives additional lustre to the brilliants. There are passages in the narrative of Tacitus superior to the best which can be quoted from Thucydides. But they are not enchased and relieved with the same skill. They are far more striking when extracted from the body of the work to which they belong, than when they occur in their place, and are read in connection with what precedes and follows.

In the delineation of character, Tacitus is unrivalled among historians, and has very few superiors among dramatists and novelists. By the delineation of character, we do not mean the practice of drawing up epigrammatic catalogues of good and bad qualities, and appending them to the names of eminent men. No

writer, indeed, has done this more skilfully than Tacitus: but this is not his peculiar glory. All the persons who occupy a large space in his works have an individuality of character which seems to pervade all their words and actions. We know them as if we had lived with them. Claudius, Nero, Otho, both the Agrippinas, are master-pieces. But Tiberius is a still higher miracle of art. The historian undertook to make us intimately acquainted with a man singularly dark and inscrutable,—with a man whose real disposition long remained swathed up in intricate folds of factitious virtues; and over whose actions the hypocrisy of his youth, and the seclusion of his old age, threw a singular mystery. He was to exhibit the specious qualities of the tyrant in a light which might render them transparent, and enable us at once to perceive the covering and the vices which it concealed. He was to trace the gradations by which the first magistrate of a republic, a senator mingling freely in debate, a noble associating with his brother nobles, was transformed into an Asiatic sultan; he was to exhibit a character distinguished by courage, self-command, and profound policy, yet defiled by all

> 'th' extravagancy,
> And crazy ribaldry of fancy."

He was to mark the gradual effect of advancing age and approaching death on this strange compound of strength and weakness; to exhibit the old sovereign of the world sinking into a dotage which, though it rendered his appetites eccentric, and his temper savage, never impaired the powers of his stern and penetrating mind—conscious of failing strength, raging with capricious sensuality, yet to the last the keenest of observers, the most artful of dissemblers, and the most terrible of masters. The task was one of extreme difficulty. The execution is almost perfect.

The talent which is required to write history thus, bears a considerable affinity to the talent of a great dramatist. There is one obvious distinction. The dramatist creates, the historian only disposes. The difference is not in the mode of execution, but in the mode of conception. Shakespeare is guided by a model which exists in his imagination; Tacitus, by a model furnished from without. Hamlet is to Tiberius what the Laocoon is to the Newton of Roubilliac.

In this part of his art Tacitus certainly had

neither equal nor second among the ancient historians. Herodotus, though he wrote in a dramatic form, had little of dramatic genius. The frequent dialogues which he introduces give vivacity and movement to the narrative; but are not strikingly characteristic. Xenophon is fond of telling his readers, at considerable length, what he thought of the persons whose adventures he relates. But he does not show them the men, and enable them to judge for themselves. The heroes of Livy are the most insipid of all beings, real or imaginary, the heroes of Plutarch always excepted. Indeed, the manner of Plutarch in this respect reminds us of the cookery of those continental inns, the horror of English travellers, in which a certain nondescript broth is kept constantly boiling, and copiously poured, without distinction, over every dish as it comes up to table. Thucydides, though at a wide interval, comes next to Tacitus. His Pericles, his Nicias, his Cleon, his Brasidas, are happily discriminated. The lines are few, the coloring faint; but the general air and expression are caught.

We begin, like the priest in Don Quixote's library, to be tired with taking down books one after another for separate judgment, and feel

inclined to pass sentence on them in masses. We shall, therefore, instead of pointing out the defects and merits of the different modern historians, state generally in what particulars they have surpassed their predecessors, and in what we conceive them to have failed.

They have certainly been, in one sense, far more strict in their adherence to truth, than most of the Greek and Roman writers. They do not think themselves entitled to render their narrative interesting by introducing descriptions, conversations, and harangues, which have no existence but in their own imagination. This improvement was gradually introduced. History commenced among the modern nations of Europe, as it had commenced among the Greeks, in romance. Froissart was our Herodotus. Italy was to Europe what Athens was to Greece. In Italy, therefore, a more accurate and manly mode of narration was early introduced. Machiavelli and Guicciardini, in imitation of Livy and Thucydides, composed speeches for their historical personages. But as the classical enthusiasm which distinguished the age of Lorenzo and Leo gradually subsided, this absurd practice was abandoned. In France, we fear, it still, in some degree, keeps its ground. In our own

country, a writer who should venture on it would be laughed to scorn. Whether the historians of the last two centuries tell more truth than those of antiquity, may perhaps be doubted. But it is quite certain that they tell fewer falsehoods.

In the philosophy of history, the moderns have very far surpassed the ancients. It is not, indeed, strange that the Greeks and Romans should not have carried the science of government, or any other experimental science, so far as it has been carried in our time; for the experimental sciences are generally in a state of progression. They were better understood in the seventeenth century than in the sixteenth, and in the eighteenth century than in the seventeenth. But this constant improvement, this natural growth of knowledge, will not altogether account for the immense superiority of the modern writers. The difference is a difference not in degree but of kind. It is not merely that new principles have been discovered, but that new faculties seem to be exerted. It is not that at one time the human intellect should have made but small progress, and at another time have advanced far; but that at one time it should have been stationary, and at

another time constantly proceeding. In taste and imagination, in the graces of style, in the arts of persuasion, in the magnificence of public works, the ancients were at least our equals. They reasoned as justly as ourselves on subjects which required pure demonstration. But in the moral sciences they made scarcely any advance. During the long period which elapsed between the fifth century before the Christian era, and the fifth century after it, little perceptible progress was made. All the metaphysical discoveries of all the philosophers, from the time of Socrates to the northern invasion, are not to be compared in importance with those which have been made in England every fifty years since the time of Elizabeth. There is not the least reason to believe that the principles of government, legislation, and political economy were better understood in the time of Augustus Cæsar, than in the time of Pericles. In our own country, the sound doctrines of trade and jurisprudence have been, within the lifetime of a single generation, dimly hinted, boldly propounded, defended, systematized, adopted by all reflecting men of all parties, quoted in legislative assemblies, incorporated into laws and treaties.

To what is this change to be attributed? Partly, no doubt, to the discovery of printing, a discovery which has not only diffused knowledge widely, but, as we have already observed, has also introduced into reasoning a precision unknown in those ancient communities, in which information was for the most part, conveyed orally. There was, we suspect, another cause, less obvious, but still more powerful.

The spirit of the two most famous nations of antiquity was remarkably exclusive. In the time of Homer, the Greeks had not begun to consider themselves as a distinct race. They still looked with something of childish wonder and awe on the riches and wisdom of Sidon and Egypt. From what causes, and by what gradations, their feelings underwent a change, it is not easy to determine. Their history from the Trojan to the Persian war, is covered with an obscurity broken only by dim and scattered gleams of truth. But it is certain that a great alteration took place. They regarded themselves as a separate people. They had common religious rites, and common principles of public law, in which foreigners had no part. In all their political systems, monarchical, aristocratical, and democratical, there was a strong family

likeness. After the retreat of Xerxes and the fall of Mardonius, national pride rendered the separation between the Greeks and the barbarians complete. The conquerors considered themselves men of a superior breed, men who, in their intercourse with neighboring nations, were to teach, and not to learn. They looked for nothing out of themselves. They borrowed nothing. They translated nothing. We cannot call to mind a single expression of any Greek writer earlier than the age of Augustus, indicating an opinion, that any thing worth reading could be written in any language except his own. The feelings which sprung from national glory were not altogether extinguished by national degradation. They were fondly cherished through ages of slavery and shame. The literature of Rome herself was regarded with contempt by those who had fled before her arms, and who bowed beneath her fasces. Voltaire says, in one of his six thousand pamphlets, that he was the first person who told the French that England had produced eminent men besides the Duke of Marlborough. Down to a very late period the Greeks seem to have stood in need of similar information with respect to their masters. With

Paulus Æmilius, Sylla, and Cæsar they were well acquainted. But the notions which they entertained respecting Cicero and Virgil were, probably, not unlike those which Boileau may have formed about Shakespeare. Dionysius lived in the most splendid age of Latin poetry and eloquence. He was a critic, and, after the manner of his age, an able critic. He studied the language of Rome, associated with its learned men, and compiled its history. Yet he seems to have thought its literature valuable only for the purpose of illustrating its antiquities. His reading appears to have been confined to its public records, and to a few old annalists. Once and but once, if we remember rightly, he quotes Ennius, to solve a question of etymology. He has written much on the art of oratory: yet he has not mentioned the name of Cicero.

The Romans submitted to the pretensions of a race which they despised. Their epic poet, while he claimed for them pre-eminence in the arts of government and war, acknowledged their inferiority in taste, eloquence, and science. Men of letters affected to understand the Greek language better than their own. Pomponius preferred the honor of becoming an Athenian,

by intellectual naturalization, to all the distinctions which were to be acquired in the political contests of Rome. His great friend composed Greek poems and memoirs. It is well known that Petrarch considered that beautiful language in which his sonnets are written, as a barbarous jargon, and entrusted his fame to those wretched Latin hexameters, which, during the last four centuries, have scarcely found four readers. Many eminent Romans appear to have felt the same contempt for their native tongue as compared with the Greek. The prejudice continued to a very late period. Julian was as partial to the Greek language as Frederic the Great to the French ; and it seems that he could not express himself with elegance in the dialect of the state which he ruled.

Even those Latin writers who did not carry this affectation so far, looked on Greece as the only fount of knowledge. From Greece they derived the measures of their poetry, and indeed, all of poetry that can be imported. From Greece they borrowed the principles and the vocabulary of their philosophy. To the literature of other nations they do not seem to have paid the slightest attention. The sacred books of the Hebrews, for example, books

which, considered merely as human compositions, are invaluable, to the critic, the antiquarian, and the philosopher, seem to have been utterly unnoticed by them. The peculiarities of Judaism, and the rapid growth of Christianity, attracted their notice. They made war against the Jews. They made laws against the Christians. But they never opened the books of Moses. Juvenal quotes the Pentateuch with censure. The author of the treatise on "the Sublime" quotes it with praise: but both of them quote it erroneously. When we consider what sublime poetry, what curious history, what striking and peculiar views of the Divine nature, and of the social duties of men, are to be found in the Jewish scriptures; when we consider that two sects on which the attention of the government was constantly fixed, appealed to those scriptures as the rule of their faith and practice, this indifference is astonishing. The fact seems to be, that the Greeks admired only themselves, and that the Romans admired only themselves and the Greeks. Literary men turned away with disgust from modes of thought and expression so widely different from all that they had been accustomed to admire. The effect was narrowness

and sameness of thought. Their minds, if we may so express ourselves, bred in and in, and were accordingly cursed with barrenness, and degeneracy. No extraneous beauty or vigor was engrafted on the decaying stock. By an exclusive attention to one class of phenomena, by an exclusive taste for one species of excellence, the human intellect was stunted. Occasional coincidences were turned into general rules. Prejudices were confounded with instincts. On man, as he was found in a particular state of society—on government, as it had existed in a particular corner of the world, many just observations were made; but of man as man, or government as government, little was known. Philosophy remained stationary. Slight changes, sometimes for the worse and sometimes for the better, were made in the superstructure. But nobody thought of examining the foundations.

The vast despotism of the Cæsars, gradually effacing all national peculiarities, and assimilating the remotest provinces of the Empire to each other, augmented the evil. At the close of the third century after Christ the prospects of mankind were fearfully dreary. A system of etiquette, as pompously frivolous as that of

the Escurial, had been established. A sovereign almost invisible; a crowd of dignitaries minutely distinguished by badges and titles; rhetoricians who said nothing but what had been said ten thousand times; schools in which nothing was taught but what had been known for ages,—such was the machinery provided for the government and instruction of the most enlightened part of the human race. That great community was then in danger of experiencing a calamity far more terrible than any of the quick, inflammatory, destroying maladies, to which nations are liable,—a tottering, drivelling, paralytic longevity, the immortality of the Struldbrugs, a Chinese civilization. It would be easy to indicate many points of resemblance between the subjects of Diocletian and the people of that Celestial Empire where, during many centuries, nothing has been learned or unlearned; where government, where education, where the whole system of life is a ceremony; where knowledge forgets to increase and multiply, and, like the talent buried in the earth, or the pound wrapped up in the napkin, experiences neither waste nor augmentation.

The torpor was broken by two great revolu-

tions: the one moral, the other political; the one from within, the other from without. The victory of Christianity over Paganism, considered with relation to this subject only, was of great importance. It overthrew the old system of morals; and with it much of the old system of metaphysics. It furnished the orator with new topics of declamation, and the logician with new points of controversy. Above all, it introduced a new principle, of which the operation was constantly felt in every part of society. It stirred the stagnant mass from the inmost depths. It excited all the passions of a stormy democracy in the quiet and listless population of an overgrown empire. The fear of heresy did what the sense of oppression could not do: it changed men, accustomed to be turned over like sheep from tyrant to tyrant, into devoted partizans and obstinate rebels. The tones of an eloquence which had been silent for ages, resounded from the pulpit of Gregory. A spirit which had been extinguished on the plains of Philippi, revived in Athanasius and Ambrose.

Yet even this remedy was not sufficiently violent for the disease. It did not prevent the empire of Constantinople from relapsing, after a short paroxysm of excitement, into a state of

stupefaction, to which history furnishes scarcely any parallel. We there find that a polished society, a society in which a most intricate and elaborate system of jurisprudence was established, in which the arts of luxury were well understood, in which the works of the great ancient writers were preserved and studied, existed for nearly a thousand years without making one great discovery in science, or producing one book which is read by any but curious inquirers. There were tumults, too, and controversies, and wars, in abundance: and these things, bad as they are in themselves, have generally been favorable to the progress of the intellect. But here they tormented without stimulating. The waters were troubled, but no healing influence descended. The agitations resembled the grinnings and writhings of a galvanized corpse, not the struggles of an athletic man.

From this miserable state the Western Empire was saved by the fiercest and most destroying visitation with which God has ever chastened his creatures—the invasion of the Northern nations. Such a cure was required for such a distemper. The Fire of London, it has been observed, was a blessing. It burned down the city, but it burned out the plague. The same

may be said of the tremendous devastations of the Roman dominions. It annihilated the noisome recesses in which lurked the seeds of great moral maladies; it cleared an atmosphere fatal to the health and vigor of the human mind. It cost Europe a thousand years of barbarism to escape the fate of China.

At length the terrible purification was accomplished; and the second civilization of mankind commenced, under the circumstances which afforded a strong security that it would never retrograde and never pause. Europe was now a great federal community: her numerous states were united by the easy ties of international law and a common religion. Their institutions, their languages, their maners, their tastes in literature, their modes of education, were widely different. Their connection was close enough to allow of mutual observation and improvement, yet not so close as to destroy the idioms of national opinion and feeling.

The balance of moral and intellectual influence thus established between the nations of Europe, is far more important than the balance of political power. Indeed, we are inclined to think that the latter is valuable principally because it tends to maintain the former. The

civilized world has thus been preserved from a uniformity of character fatal to all improvement. Every part of it has been illuminated with light reflected from every other. Competition has produced activity where monopoly would have produced sluggishness. The number of experiments in moral science which the speculator has an opportunity of witnessing, has been increased beyond all calculation. Society and human nature, instead of being seen in a single point of view, are presented to him under ten thousand different aspects. By observing the manners of surrounding nations, by studying their literature, by comparing it with that of his own country and of the ancient republics, he is enabled to correct those errors into which the most acute men must fall when they reason from a single species to a genius. He learns to distinguish what is local from what is universal; what is transitory from what is eternal; to discriminate between exceptions and rules; to trace the operation of disturbing causes; to separate those general principles, which are always true and everywhere applicable, from the accidental circumstances with which, in every community, they are blended, and with which, in an isolated community, they are confounded by the most philosophical mind.

Hence it is, that, in generalization, the writers of modern times have far surpassed those of antiquity. The historians of our own country are unequalled in depth and precision of reason; and even in the works of our mere compilers, we often meet with speculations beyond the reach of Thucydides or Tacitus.

But it must, at the same time, be admitted that they have characteristic faults, so closely connected with their characteristic merits, and of such magnitude, that it may well be doubted whether, on the whole, this department of literature has gained or lost during the last two-and-twenty centuries.

The best historians of later times have been seduced from truth, not by their imagination, but by their reason. They far excel their predecessors in the art of deducing general principles from facts. But unhappily they have fallen into the error of distorting facts to suit general principles. They arrive at a theory from looking at some of the phenomena, and the remaining phenomena they strain or curtail to suit the theory. For this purpose it is not necessary that they should assert what is absolutely false, for all questions in morals and politics are questions of comparison and degree. Any proposi-

tion which does not involve a contradiction in terms, may, by possibility, be true; and if all the circumstances which raise a probability in its favor be stated and enforced, and those which lead to an opposite conclusion be omitted or lightly passed over, it may appear to be demonstrated. In every human character and transaction there is a mixture of good and evil —a little exaggeration, a little suppression, a judicious use of epithets, a watchful and searching scepticism with respect to the evidence on one side, a convenient credulity with respect to every report or tradition on the other, may easily make a saint of Laud, or a tyrant of Henry the Fourth.

This species of misrepresentation abounds in the most valuable works of modern historians. Herodotus tells his story like a slovenly witness, who, heated by partialities and prejudices, unacquainted with the established rules of evidence, and uninstructed as to the obligations of his oath, confounds what he imagines with what he has seen and heard, and brings out facts, reports, conjectures, and fancies, in one mass. Hume is an accomplished advocate: without positively asserting much more than he can prove, he gives prominence to all the circum-

stances which support his case; he glides lightly over those which are unfavorable to it; his own witnesses are applauded and encouraged; the statements which seem to throw discredit on them are controverted; the contradictions into which they fall are explained away; a clear and connected abstract of their evidence is given. Every thing that is offered on the other side is scrutinized with the utmost severity;—every suspicious circumstance is a ground for comment and invective; what cannot be denied is extenuated, or passed by without notice; concessions even are sometimes made—but this insidious candor only increases the effect of the vast mass of sophistry.

We have mentioned Hume, as the ablest and most popular writer of his class; but the charge which we have brought against him is one to which all our most distinguished historians are in some degree obnoxious. Gibbon, in particular, deserves very severe censure. Of all the numerous culprits, however, none is more deeply guilty than Mr. Mitford. We willingly acknowledge the obligations which are due to his talents and industry. The modern historians of Greece had been in the habit of writing as if the world had learned nothing new during the

last sixteen hundred years. Instead of illustrating the events which they narrated, by the philosophy of a more enlightened age, they judged of antiquity by itself alone. They seemed to think that notions, long driven from every other corner of literature, had a prescriptive right to occupy this last fastness. They considered all the ancient historians as equally authentic. They scarcely made any distinction between him who related events at which he had himself been present, and him who five hundred years after composed a philosophic romance for a society which had in the interval undergone a complete change. It was all Greek, and all true! The centuries which separated Plutarch from Thucydides seemed as nothing to men who lived in an age so remote. The distance of time produced an error similar to that which is sometimes produced by distance of place. There are many good ladies who think that all the people in India live together, and who charge a friend setting out for Calcutta with kind messages to Bombay. To Rollin and Barthelemi, in the same manner, all the classics were contemporaries.

Mr. Mitford certainly introduced great improvements; he showed us that men who

wrote in Greek and Latin sometimes told lies; he showed us that ancient history might be related in such a manner as to furnish not only allusions to schoolboys, but important lessons to statesmen. From that love of theatrical effect and high-flown sentiment which had poisoned almost every other work on the same subject, his book is perfectly free. But his passion for a theory as false, and far more ungenerous, led him substantially to violate truth in every page. Statements unfavorable to democracy are made with unhesitating confidence, and with the utmost bitterness of language. Every charge brought against a monarch, or an aristocracy, is sifted with the utmost care. If it cannot be denied, some palliating supposition is suggested, or we are at least reminded that some circumstances now unknown *may* have justified what at present appears unjustifiable. Two events are reported by the same author in the same sentence; their truth rests on the same testimony; but the one supports the darling hypothesis, and the other seems inconsistent with it. The one is taken and the other is left.

The practice of distorting narrative into a conformity with theory, is a vice not so unfavorable as at first sight it may appear, to the inter-

ests of political science. We have compared the writers who indulge in it to advocates; and we may add, that their conflicting fallacies, like those of advocates, correct each other. It has alwas been held, in the most enlightened nations, that a tribunal will decide a judicial question most fairly, when it has heard two able men argue, as unfairly as possible, on the two opposite sides of it; and we are inclined to think that this opinion is just. Sometimes, it is true, superior eloquence and dexterity will make the worse appear the better reason; but it is at least certain that the judge will be compelled to contemplate the case under two different aspects. It is certain that no important consideration will altogether escape notice.

This is at present the state of history. The Poet-laureate appears for the Church of England, Lingard for the Church of Rome. Brodie has moved to set aside the verdicts obtained by Hume; and the cause in which Mitford succeeded, is, we understand, about to be reheard. In the midst of these disputes, however, history proper, if we may use the term, is disappearing. The high, grave, impartial summing up of Thucydides is nowhere to be found.

While our historians are practising all the

arts of controversy, they miserably neglect the art of narration, the art of interesting the affections, and presenting pictures to the imagination. That a writer may produce these effects without violating truth, is sufficiently proved by many excellent biographical works. The immense popularity which well-written books of this kind have acquired, deserves the serious consideration of historians. Voltaire's "Charles the Twelfth," Marmontel's "Memoirs," Boswell's "Life of Johnson," Southey's account of Nelson, are perused with delight by the most frivolous and indolent. Whenever any tolerable book of the same description makes its appearance, the circulating libraries are mobbed; the book societies are in commotion; the new novel lies uncut; the magazines and newspapers fill their columns with extracts. In the meantime histories of great empires, written by men of eminent ability, lie unread on the shelves of ostentatious libraries.

The writers of history seem to entertain an aristocratical contempt for the writers of memoirs. They think it beneath the dignity of men who describe the revolutions of nations, to dwell on the details which constitute the charm of biography. They have imposed on

themselves a code of conventional decencies, as absurd as that which has been the bane of the French drama. The most characteristic and interesting circumstances are omitted or softened down, because, as we are told, they are too trivial for the majesty of history. The majesty of history seems to resemble the majesty of the poor King of Spain, who died a martyr to ceremony, because the proper dignitaries were not at hand to render him assistance.

That history would be more amusing if this etiquette were relaxed, will, we suppose, be acknowledged. But would it be less dignified, or less useful? What do we mean, when we say that one past event is important, and another insignificant? No past event has any intrinsic importance. The knowledge of it is valuable only as it leads us to form just calculations with respect to the future. A history which does not serve this purpose, though it may be filled with battles, treaties, and commotions, is as useless as the series of turnpike-tickets collected by Sir Matthew Mite.

Let us suppose that Lord Clarendon, instead of filling hundreds of folio pages with copies of state papers, in which the same assertions and contradictions are repeated, till the reader is

overpowered with weariness, had condescended to be the Boswell of the Long Parliament. Let us suppose that he had exhibited to us the wise and lofty self-government of Hampden, leading while he seemed to follow, and propounding unanswerable arguments in the strongest forms, with the modest air of an inquirer anxious for information; the delusions which misled the noble spirit of Vane; the coarse fanaticism which concealed the yet loftier genius of Cromwell, destined to control a mutinous army and a factious people, to abase the flag of Holland, to arrest the victorious arms of Sweden, and to hold the balance firm between the rival monarchies of France and Spain. Let us suppose that he had made his Cavaliers and Roundheads talk in their own style; that he had reported some of the ribaldry of Rupert's pages, and some of the cant of Harrison and Fleetwood. Would not his work in that case have been more interesting? Would it not have been more accurate?

A history, in which every particular incident may be true, may on the whole be false. The circumstances which have most influence on the happiness of mankind, the changes of manners and morals, the transition of com-

munities from poverty to wealth, from knowledge to ignorance, from ferocity to humanity, —these are, for the most part, noiseless revolutions. Their progress is rarely indicated by what historians are pleased to call important events. They are not achieved by armies, or enacted by senates. They are sanctioned by no treaties, and recorded in no archives. They are carried on in every school, in every church, behind ten thousand counters, at ten thousand firesides. The upper-current of society presents no certain criterion by which we can judge of the direction in which the under-current flows. We read of defeats and victories. But we know that nations may be miserable amidst victories, and prosperous amidst defeats. We read of the fall of wise ministers, and of the rise of profligate favorites. But we must remember how small a proportion the good or evil effected by a single statesman can bear to the good or evil of a great social system.

Bishop Watson compares a geologist to a gnat mounted on an elephant, and laying down theories as to the whole internal structure of the vast animal, from the phenomena of the hide. The comparison is unjust to the geolo-

gists; but it is very applicable to those historians who write as if the body politic were homogeneous, who look only on the surface of affairs, and never think of the mighty and various organization which lies deep below.

In the works of such writers as these, England, at the close of the Seven Years' War, is in the highest state of prosperity. At the close of the American war she is in a miserable and degraded condition; as if the people were not on the whole as rich, as well governed, and as well educated, at the latter period as at the former. We have read books called Histories of England, under the reign of George the Second, in which the rise of Methodism is not even mentioned. A hundred years hence this breed of authors will, we hope, be extinct. If it should still exist, the late ministerial interregnum will be described in terms which will seem to imply that all government was at an end; that the social contract was annulled, and that the hand of every man was against his neighbor, until the wisdom and virtue of the new Cabinet educed order out of the chaos of anarchy. We are quite certain that misconceptions as gross, prevail at this moment, respecting many important parts of our annals.

The effect of historical reading is analogous, in many respects, to that produced by foreign travel. The student, like the tourist, is transported into a new state of society. He sees new fashions. He hears new modes of expression. His mind is enlarged by contemplating the wide diversities of laws, of morals, and of manners. But men may travel far, and return with minds as contracted as if they had never stirred from their own market-town. In the same manner, men may know the dates of many battles, and the genealogies of many royal houses, and yet be no wiser. Most people look at past times, as princes look at foreign countries. More than one illustrious stranger has landed on our island amidst the shouts of a mob, has dined with the king, has hunted with the master of the stag-hounds, has seen the Guards reviewed, and a knight of the garter installed; has cantered along Regent Street; has visited St. Paul's, and noted down its dimensions, and has then departed, thinking that he has seen England. He has, in fact, seen a few public buildings, public men, and public ceremonies. But of the vast and complex system of society, of the fine shades of national character, of the practical operation of

government and laws, he knows nothing. He who would understand these things rightly, must not confine his observations to palaces and solemn days. He must see ordinary men as they appear in their ordinary business and in their ordinary pleasures. He must mingle in the crowds of the exchange and the coffee-house. He must obtain admittance to the convivial table and the domestic hearth. He must bear with vulgar expressions. He must not shrink from exploring even the retreats of misery. He who wishes to understand the condition of mankind in former ages, must proceed on the same principle. If he attends only to public transactions, to wars, congresses, and debates, his studies will be as unprofitable as the travels of those imperial, royal, and serene sovereigns, who form their judgment of our island from having gone in state to a few fine sights, and from having held formal conference with a few great officers.

The perfect historian is he in whose work the character and spirit of an age are exhibited in miniature. He relates no fact, he attributes no expression to his characters, which is not authenticated by sufficient testimony. But by judicious selection, rejection, and arrangement,

he gives to truth those attractions which have been usurped by fiction. In his narrative a due subordination is observed; some transactions are prominent, others retire. But the scale on which he represents them is increased or diminished, not according to the dignity of the persons concerned in them, but according to the degree in which they elucidate the condition of society and the nature of man. He shows us the court, the camp, and the senate. But he shows us also the nation. He considers no anecdote, no peculiarity of manner, no familiar saying, as too insignificant for his notice, which is not too insignificant to illustrate the operation of laws, of religion, and of education, and to mark the progress of the human mind. Men will not merely be described, but will be made intimately known to us. The changes of manners will be indicated, not merely by a few general phrases, or a few extracts from statistical documents, but by appropriate images presented in every line.

If a man, such as we are supposing, should write the history of England, he would assuredly not omit the battles, the sieges, the negotiations, the seditions, the ministerial changes. But with these he would intersperse

the details which are the charm of historical romances. At Lincoln Cathedral there is a beautiful painted window, which was made by an apprentice out of the pieces of glass which had been rejected by his master. It is so far superior to every other in the church, that, according to the tradition, the vanquished artist killed himself from mortification. Sir Walter Scott, in the same manner, has used those fragments of truth which historians have scornfully thrown behind them, in a manner which may well excite their envy. He has constructed out of their gleanings works which, even considered as histories, are scarcely less valuable than theirs. But a truly great historian would reclaim those materials which the novelist has appropriated. The history of the government, and the history of the people, would be exhibited in that mode in which alone they can be exhibited justly, in inseparable conjunction and intermixture. We should not then have to look for the wars and votes of the Puritans in Clarendon, and for their phraseology in "Old Mortality"; for one half of King James in Hume, and for the other half in the "Fortunes of Nigel."

The early part of our imaginary history

would be rich with coloring from romance, ballad, and chronicle. We should find ourselves in the company of knights such as those of Froissart, and of pilgrims such as those who rode with Chaucer from the Tabard. Society would be shown from the highest to the lowest, —from the royal cloth of state to the den of the outlaw; from the throne of the legate to the chimney-corner where the begging friar regaled himself. Palmers, minstrels, crusaders,— the stately monastery, with the good cheer in its refectory, and the high-mass in its chapel,— the manor-house, with its hunting and hawking,—the tournament, with its heralds and ladies, the trumpets and the cloth of gold,— would give truth and life to the representation. We should perceive, in a thousand slight touches, the importance of the privileged burgher, and the fierce and haughty spirit which swelled under the collar of the degraded villain. The revival of letters would not merely be described in a few magnificent periods. We should discern, in innumerable particulars, the fermentation of mind, the eager appetite for knowledge, which distinguished the sixteenth from the fifteenth century. In the Reformation we should see, not merely a schism

which changed the ecclesiastical constitution of England, and the mutual relations of the European powers, but a moral war which raged in every family, which set the father against the son, and the son against the father, the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother. Henry would be painted with the skill of Tacitus. We should have the change of his character from his profuse and joyous youth, to his savage and imperious old age. We should perceive the gradual progress of selfish and tyrannical passions, in a mind not naturally insensible or ungenerous; and to the last we should detect some remains of that open and noble temper which endeared him to a people whom he oppressed, struggling with the hardness of despotism, and the irritability of disease. We should see Elizabeth in all her weakness, and in all her strength, surrounded by the handsome favorites whom she never trusted, and the wise old statesmen, whom she never dismissed, uniting in herself the most contradictory qualities of both her parents,—the coquetry, the caprice, the petty malice of Anne,—the haughty and resolute spirit of Henry. We have no hesitation in saying, that a great artist might produce a portrait of this

remarkable woman, at least as striking as that in the novel of "Kenilworth," without employing a single trait not authenticated by ample testimony. In the meantime, we should see arts cultivated, wealth accumulated, the conveniences of life improved. We should see the keeps, where nobles, insecure themselves, spread insecurity around them, gradually giving place to the halls of peaceful opulence, to the oriels of Longleat, and the stately pinnacles of Burleigh. We should see towns extended, deserts cultivated, the hamlets of fishermen turned into wealthy havens, the meal of the peasant improved, and his hut more commodiously furnished We should see those opinions and feelings which produced the great struggle against the house of Stuart slowly growing up in the bosoms of private families, before they manifested themselves in parliamentary debates. Then would come the Civil War. Those skirmishes, on which Clarendon dwelt so minutely, would be told, as Thucydides would have told them, with perspicuous conciseness. They are merely connecting links. But the great characteristics of the age, the loyal enthusiasm of the brave English gentry, the fierce licentious-

ness of the swearing, dicing, drunken reprobates, whose excesses disgraced the royal cause, —the austerity of the Presbyterian Sabbaths in the city, the extravagance of the independent preachers in the camp, the precise garb, the severe countenance, the petty scruples, the affected accent, the absurd names and phrases which marked the Puritans,—the valor, the policy, the public spirit, which lurked beneath these ungraceful disguises, the dreams of the raving Fifth-monarchy-man, the dreams, scarcely less wild, of the philosophic republican, —all these would enter into the representation, and render it at at once more exact and more striking.

The instruction derived from history thus written would be of a vivid and practical character. It would be received by the imagination as well as by the reason. It would be not merely traced on the mind, but branded into it. Many truths, too, would be learned, which can be learned in no other manner. As the history of states is generally written, the greatest and most momentous revolutions seem to come upon them like supernatural inflictions, without warning or cause. But the fact is that such revolutions are almost always the consequences

of moral changes, which have gradually passed on the mass of the community, and which ordinarily proceeded far, before their progress is indicated by any public measure. An intimate knowledge of the domestic history of nations is therefore absolutely necessary to the prognosis of political events. A narrative defective in this respect is as useless as a medical treatise which should pass by all the symptoms attendant on the early stage of a disease, and mention only what occurs when the patient is beyond the reach of remedies.

A historian, such as we are attempting to describe, would indeed be an intellectual prodigy. In his mind, powers, scarcely compatible with each other, must be tempered into an exquisite harmony. We shall sooner see another Shakespeare or another Homer. The highest excellence to which any single faculty can be brought, would be less surprising than such a happy and delicate combination of qualities. Yet the contemplation of imaginary models is not an unpleasant or useless employment of the mind. It cannot, indeed, produce perfection, but it produces improvement, and nourishes that generous and liberal fastidiousness, which is not inconsistent with the strongest sensibility

to merit, and which, while it exalts our conceptions of the art, does not render us unjust to the artist.

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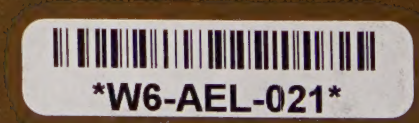
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